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ABSTRACT

Myths are stories that explain why the world is the way it is. All cultures have them. Throughout history, artists have been inspired by myths and legends and have given them visual form. Sometimes these works of art are the only surviving record of what particular cultures believed and valued. But even where written records or oral traditions exist, art adds to the understanding of myths and legends. This packet begins by asking: "What Is Myth?" and offers readers basic ideas on the subject. The packet illustrates 26 myths in art throughout the world. It divides myths and legends in art by cultures, such as African, Euro-American, Chinese, Ancient Egyptian, Western European, Ancient Greek and Roman, Japanese, Native American, and Oceanic. The packet illustrates art by theme, including creation myths and hero myths, following these with a compare and contrast exercise. To help students understand the concept of myth, the material uses Herbert Hoover's life as an example. It provides a section about the birthplace of Herbert Hoover, giving key ideas, background, and discussion questions. The packet presents additional materials on the other world myths in art, in the same format as that of the Herbert Hoover lesson. The packet contains many colorful art illustrations and a glossary of art terms. It lists 10 suggestions for further reading. (BT)

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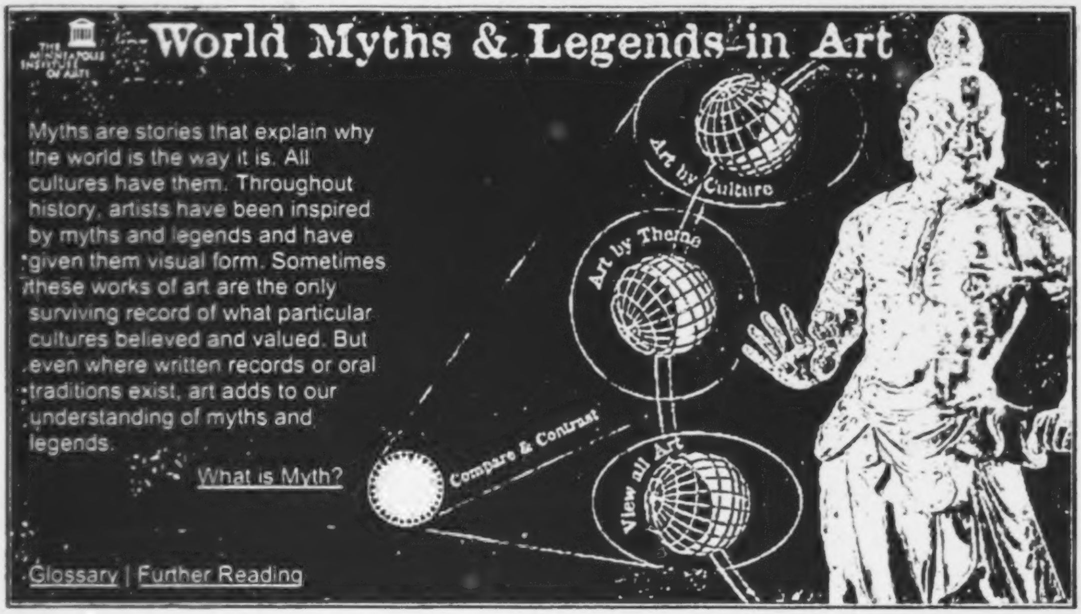

THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS
World Myths & Legends in Art
Art by Culture
Art by Theme
Compare & Contrast
View all Art
What is Myth?
Glossary | Further Reading

Myths are stories that explain why the world is the way it is. All cultures have them. Throughout history, artists have been inspired by myths and legends and have given them visual form. Sometimes these works of art are the only surviving record of what particular cultures believed and valued. But even where written records or oral traditions exist, art adds to our understanding of myths and legends.

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What Is Myth?

Introduction

What is myth? There is no one satisfactory definition, since myths serve many different purposes. The first purpose was to explain the inexplicable. Since the beginning of humankind's existence, myths have functioned as rationalizations for the fundamental mysteries of life, questions such as: Who made the world? How will it end? Where do we come from? Who was the first human? What happens when we die? Why does the sun travel across the sky each day? Why does the moon wax and wane? Why do we have annual agricultural cycles and seasonal changes? Who controls our world, and how can we influence those beings so our lives are easier?

A Universal Need

In the absence of scientific information of any kind, long ago societies all over the world devised creation myths, resurrection myths, and complex systems of supernatural beings, each with specific powers, and stories about their actions. Since people were often isolated from each other, most myths evolved independently, but the various myths are surprisingly similar, in particular creation myths.

So the need for myth is a universal need. Over time, one version of a myth would become the accepted standard that was passed down to succeeding generations, first through story-telling, and then, much later, set down in written form. Inevitably myths became part of systems of religion, and were integrated into rituals and ceremonies, which included music, dancing and magic.

The second function of myth is to justify an existing social system and to account for its rites and customs. One constant rule of mythology is whatever happens among the gods reflects events on earth. In this way, events such as invasions and radical social changes became incorporated into myths. Some myths, especially those from the Greco-Roman and medieval periods, also serve to illustrate moral principles, frequently through feats of heroism performed by mortals.

Compelling Stories for Artists

But what concerns us most here are the *visual* interpretations of myths that artists through time have given us. Many myths are such compelling stories that artists have turned to them again and again, reinterpreting them from the vantage point of their own experience and imagination. An artist's representation provides a concrete mental picture of a myth or mythological character, as in the Antimenes painter's image of Athena meeting Herakles with her chariot. In some instances, as with the memorial tusk from Benin, a work of art can trigger a story. While some representations, such as the Egyptian statue of Thoth, are largely dictated by tradition, others such as Maurice Denis's painting of Orpheus and Eurydice, are more personal. Regardless of why or how it was created, each image contributes an added dimension to our understanding or interpretation of that myth.

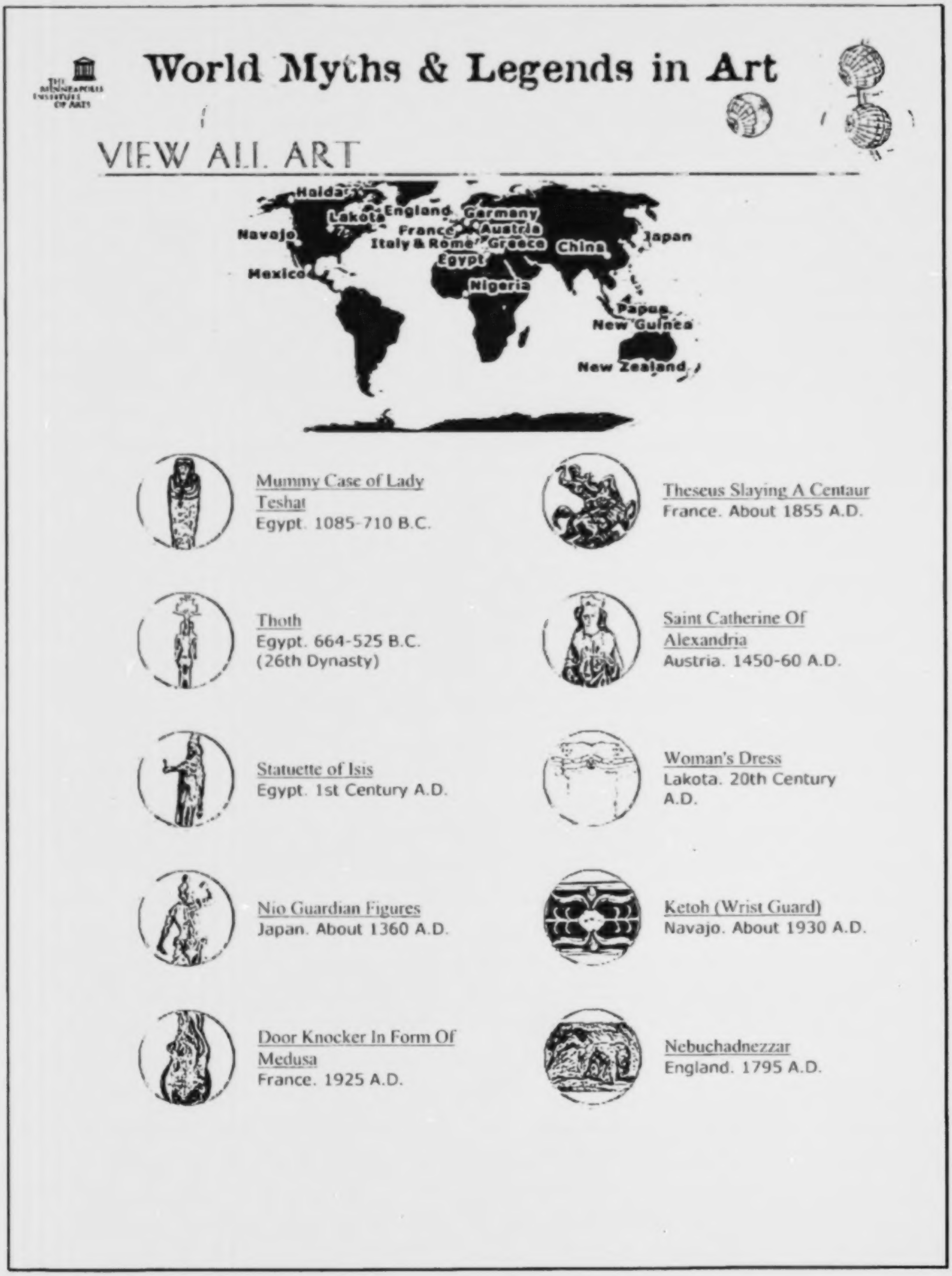
Many of the images in this collection represent myths that explain a practice, belief, institution, or natural phenomenon. The Yoruba king's crown, the Roman furniture decoration, and the abstract designs on the Lakota dress refer to creation stories. The Bamana antelope headdress symbolizes Chi Wara, who taught the Bamana people how to plant, and the pig carved on a pole evokes a story about traditional Melanesian society of New Ireland.

Hero myths, tales of adventure filled with fantastic beings and superhuman feats, are also represented in this collection. The stories told through the images of Isis, Theseus, the Nio guardians, and Saint Catherine of Alexandria, to name a few, present a broad range of heroic acts achieved through clever magic, physical strength, and devout faith.

The Truth About Myths and Legends

There are a few images that are about real people or events. These are more properly called legends, to distinguish them from myths, which are imaginary. For example, the story of Nebuchadnezzar is based on the life of a ruler of the ancient Babylonian Empire, and the story recounted on the carved tusk from Benin is based entirely on actual personalities and events. But in each case, the lives of the lead characters are embellished with borrowed or fictional additions. The goal of a legend was not to provide an accurate record of an individual's life, but to portray it as an example of virtuous or evil conduct - with appropriate consequences - to be emulated or avoided. In the legends about Christian saints, historical facts were altered as needed, and emphasis place on miraculous or extraordinary events. The legend about Herbert Hoover is a particular case, because he was still alive when it was consciously created for him to enhance his new status as President.

As the richness of the myths represented in this collection conveys, myth and falsehood are not synonymous. What is truth to one is fancy to another; however, it is not up to any of us to decide that one community's mythology is any more or less valid than another's. Myth is a positive force that unites many cultures rather than divides them. Throughout the world myths provide people with explanations, histories, role models, entertainment, and many other things that enable them to direct their own actions and understand their own surroundings.


THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS
Haida
Lakota
England
Germany
Navajo
France
Austria
Italy & Rome
Greece
China
Japan
Egypt
Mexico
Nigeria
Papua New Guinea
New Zealand

World Myths & Legends in Art

VIEW ALL ART

Mummy Case of Lady Teshat
Egypt. 1085-710 B.C.

Theseus Slaying A Centaur
France. About 1855 A.D.

Thoth
Egypt. 664-525 B.C.
(26th Dynasty)

Saint Catherine Of Alexandria
Austria. 1450-60 A.D.

Statuette of Isis
Egypt. 1st Century A.D.

Woman's Dress
Lakota. 20th Century A.D.

Nio Guardian Figures
Japan. About 1360 A.D.

Ketoh (Wrist Guard)
Navajo. About 1930 A.D.

Door Knocker In Form Of Medusa
France. 1925 A.D.

Nebuchadnezzar
England. 1795 A.D.

Cassone
Italy. About 1600 A.D.

Memorial Tusk
Nigeria. Late 18th - Early 19th Century A.D.

Presentation Box
China. 1736-95 A.D.

Orpheus & Eurydice
France. 1910 A.D.

Hydria
Greece. 530-500 B.C.

Malagan Pole
Papua New Guinea (New Ireland). 19th Century A.D.

The Elevation Of The Magdalen
Germany. 16th Century A.D.

The Birthplace Of Herbert Hoover, West Branch, Iowa
United States. 1931 A.D.

King's Crown
Nigeria. 19th Century A.D.

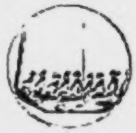
Oceanus
Rome. 1st - 2nd centuries A.D.

Dragon Robe for an Empress of China
China. 19th Century A.D.

Chief's Rattle
Haida. 19th Century - 20th Century A.D.

Peace Concluded
England. 1856 A.D.

Maori Post Figure: Poutokomanawa
New Zealand. about 1840 A.D.



Model Boat with Figures
Egypt. 2133-1786 B.C.

Rattle in the Form of a Ball Player
Mexico. 6th-9th Century A.D.

World Myths & Legends in Art

ART BY CULTURE

African

Memorial Tusk
Nigeria. Late 18th - Early 19th Century A.D.

King's Crown
Nigeria. 19th Century A.D.

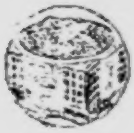
Euro-American

United States

The Birthplace Of Herbert Hoover, West Branch, Iowa
United States, United States. 1931 A.D.

Chinese

Dragon Robe for an Empress of China
China. 19th Century A.D.



Presentation Box
China. 1736-95 A.D.

Ancient Egyptian

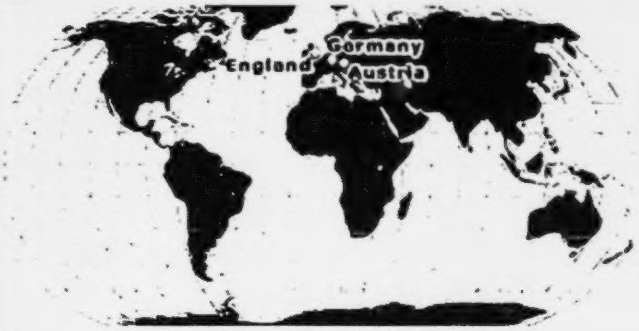
Mummy Case of Lady Teshat
Egypt. 1085-710 B.C.

Statuette of Isis
Egypt. 1st Century A.D.

Thoth
Egypt. 664-525 B.C.
(26th Dynasty)

Model Boat with Figures
Egypt. 2133-1786 B.C.

Western European


Germany
England
Austria

Saint Catherine Of Alexandria
Austria. 1450-60 A.D.

Nebuchadnezzar
England. 1795 A.D.

The Elevation Of The Magdalen
Germany. 16th Century A.D.

Peace Concluded
England. 1856 A.D.

Ancient Greek and Roman

France
Italy & Rome
Greece

Hydria
Greece. 530-500 B.C.

Theseus Slaying A Centaur
France. About 1855 A.D.

Oceanus
Rome. 1st - 2nd centuries A.D.

Orpheus & Eurydice
France. 1910 A.D.

Cassone
Italy. About 1600 A.D.

Door Knocker In Form Of Medusa
France. 1925 A.D.

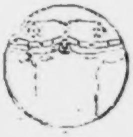
Japanese

Nio Guardian Figures
Japan. About 1360 A.D.

Native American

Haida
Lakota
Navajo
Mexico

Chief's Rattle
Haida. 19th Century - 20th Century A.D.

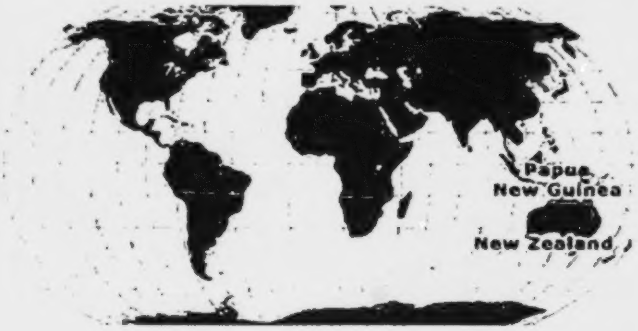


Woman's Dress
Lakota. 20th Century A.D.

Rattle in the Form of a Ball Player
Mexico. 6th-9th Century A.D.

Ketoh (Wrist Guard)
Navajo. About 1930 A.D.

Oceanic


Papua New Guinea
New Zealand

Malagan Pole
Papua New Guinea (New Ireland). 19th Century A.D.

Maori Post Figure: Poutokomanawa
New Zealand. about 1840 A.D.

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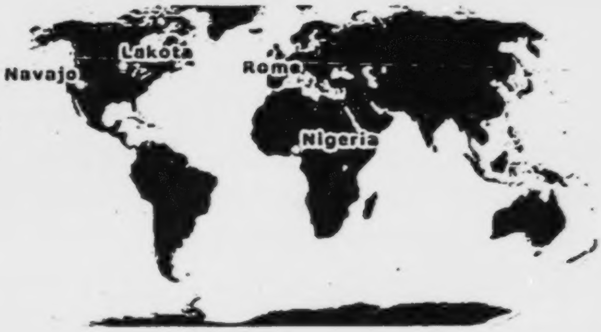
World Myths & Legends in Art

ART BY THEME

Creation Myths


Lakota
Navajo
Rome
Nigeria

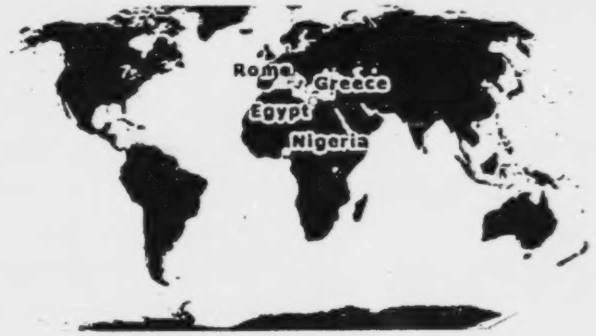
King's Crown
Nigeria. 19th Century A.D.

Oceanus
Rome. 1st - 2nd centuries A.D.

Ketoh (Wrist Guard)
Navajo. About 1930 A.D.

Woman's Dress
Lakota. 20th Century A.D.

God Myths


Rome
Greece
Egypt
Nigeria

Mummy Case of Lady Teshat
Egypt. 1085-710 B.C.

Statuette of Isis
Egypt. 1st Century A.D.

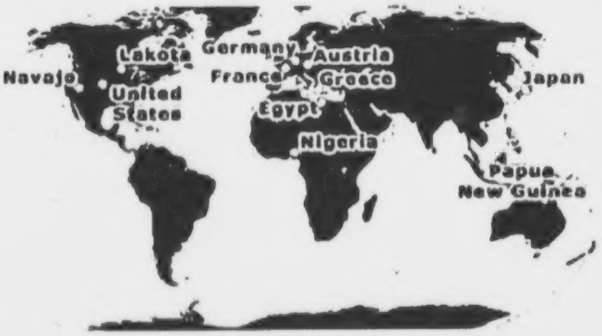
Thoth
Egypt. 664-525 B.C.
(26th Dynasty)

Oceanus
Rome. 1st - 2nd centuries
A.D.

King's Crown
Nigeria. 19th Century
A.D.

Hydria
Greece. 530-500 B.C.

Hero Myths


Navajo
Lakota
United States
Germany
France
Austria
Greece
Egypt
Nigeria
Japan
Papua New Guinea

Mummy Case of Lady Teshat
Egypt. 1085-710 B.C.

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Papua New Guinea (New Ireland). 19th Century
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The Birthplace Of Herbert Hoover, West Branch, Iowa
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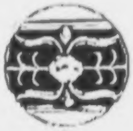
Greece. 530-500 B.C.

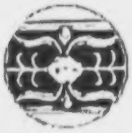


Ketoh (Wrist Guard)
Navajo. About 1930 A.D.

Myths Explaining a Practice

Navajo
Japan
Egypt
Nigeria
Papua New Guinea

Mummy Case of Lady Teshat
Egypt. 1085-710 B.C.



Ketoh (Wrist Guard)
Navajo. About 1930 A.D.

Thoth
Egypt. 664-525 B.C. (26th Dynasty)

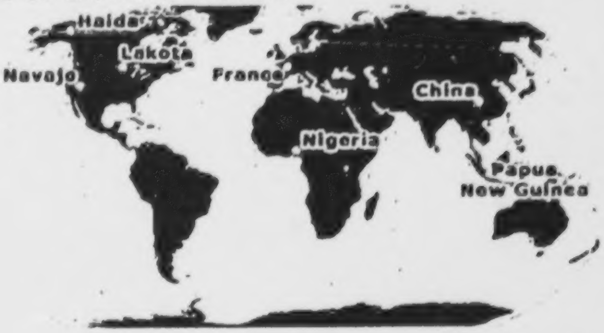
Malagan Pole
Papua New Guinea (New Ireland). 19th Century A.D.

Memorial Tusk
Nigeria. Late 18th - Early 19th Century A.D.

Nio Guardian Figures
Japan. About 1360 A.D.

King's Crown
Nigeria. 19th Century A.D.

Myths with Animals or Beast Characters


Haida
Lakota
Navajo
France
China
Nigeria
Papua, New Guinea

Dragon Robe for an Empress of China
China. 19th Century A.D.

Theseus Slaying A Centaur
France. About 1855 A.D.

Chief's Rattle
Haida. 19th Century - 20th Century A.D.

Woman's Dress
Lakota. 20th Century A.D.

Memorial Tusk
Nigeria. Late 18th - Early 19th Century A.D.

Ketoh (Wrist Guard)
Navajo. About 1930 A.D.

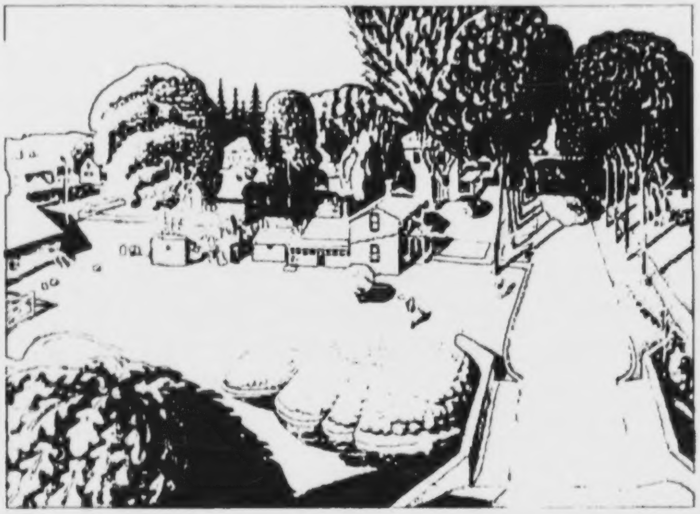
Malagan Pole
Papua New Guinea (New Ireland). 19th Century A.D.

World Myths & Legends in Art

COMPARE & CONTRAST

All the works of art in this collection of images were inspired by mythology. What else do they have in common? How are they different? Use the Mythological Comparisons chart to select works of art for comparison. You might choose two works of art from the category of Hero Myths, for example, and compare them in terms of media and technique, function, size, cultural origins, narrative, style, expressive quality, subject matter, or artistic intent.

The Birthplace of Herbert Hoover, West Branch, Iowa



THE BIRTHPLACE OF HERBERT HOOVER, WEST BRANCH, IOWA
Grant Wood
1931
Oil on composition board
The John R. Van Derlip Fund; owned jointly with the Des Moines Art Center

United States

KEY IDEAS

- The notion that anyone, through personal effort, can achieve financial success and can grow up to become president is among the United States' most beloved and enduring myths.
- Herbert Hoover rose from humble beginnings in a small midwestern town to become the 31st president of the United States.
- The precise LINEAR (?) PATTERNS (?) and close attention to details in this painting are hallmarks of Grant Wood's REGIONALIST (?) style.

STORY

Herbert Hoover

Herbert Clark Hoover was born in 1874 in West Branch, Iowa. He lived with his parents and two siblings in a small cottage. Herbert's parents died - his father from typhoid fever and his mother from pneumonia - when he was very young. In 1884, 10-year-old "Bertie" moved to Oregon to live with his uncle, a country doctor. At 17, he entered Stanford University, from which he graduated with a degree in engineering.

Hoover became a very successful mining engineer, making his fortune operating mines in San Francisco, England, Australia, and China. When World War I broke out, Hoover established the American Relief Committee in London at the request of the United States government, helping more than 100,000 Americans to escape war-torn Europe. Later he chaired the Commission for Relief in Belgium and served as the United States Food Administrator. After the war, he created the American Relief Administration, administering more than 100 million dollars for clothing and food for oppressed Europeans and Russians recovering from German occupation. When government funds for that program ran out, Hoover secured private contributions to keep it going.

Hoover's dedication to relief efforts made him a hero. Both political parties wanted him to become their presidential candidate. He ran for a time in the 1928 Democratic primaries, but was ultimately victorious as a Republican candidate. Recognizing the political advantage of his popular rags-to-riches story, Hoover kicked off his campaign with a big public rally in his rural hometown. In 1929 the poor orphan boy from Iowa became president of the United States.

The Hoover Legend

After a large majority elected him President, Hoover assumed heroic status in the public perception. Hoover's life story adapted itself easily to two uniquely American ideals: The "rags-to-riches" story, and "anyone can grow up to be President." The effort to build up a legend around Hoover's life that began during his term as President was a forerunner of the "image making" campaigns deemed essential by today's politicians. In fact, Hoover badly needed a friendly, approachable image. He was a serious man who was uncomfortable speaking in public, and seemed stiff and boring in front of big crowds.[1]

[1] In part because of the Great Depression and his ineffective policies for dealing with it, Hoover is seldom seen as a great President. As a result, he was not re-elected to the Presidency in 1932. Nonetheless, Hoover was widely praised for his many other accomplishments. For his leadership in war and famine relief, he is remembered as "The Great Humanitarian."

BACKGROUND

Grant Wood

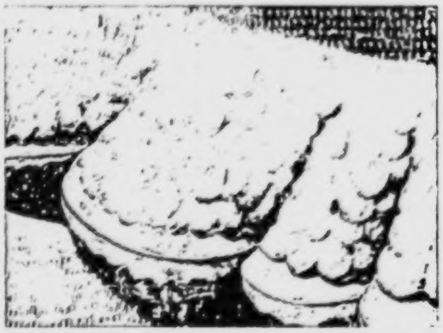
The artist Grant Wood is something of a legend himself, another small-town Iowa boy made good. Wood studied art in Europe for several years but returned to the United States in the 1920s. Dissatisfied with modern painting styles, he developed his own style inspired by the brilliant colors and tiny details of 15th-century Flemish paintings.

Responding to a resurgence of nationalism and a new fascination with the American past, Wood painted many GENRE scenes of historical and regional subjects, including farmhouses, small-town folk, and the rural landscape. He and other midwestern artists who painted scenes of Americana were called Regionalists. Wood emphasized description and narrative in the same way as the contemporary American writers he admired. Like Sinclair Lewis, he raised ordinary experiences of daily life in small town America to mythical proportions.

The Birthplace of Herbert Hoover, West Branch, Iowa

Wood places the viewer at the crest of a steep hill, looking down into a green valley where a tour guide points to a small cottage beside a larger white house. But this is not an ordinary cottage - it is the place where Herbert Hoover was born.

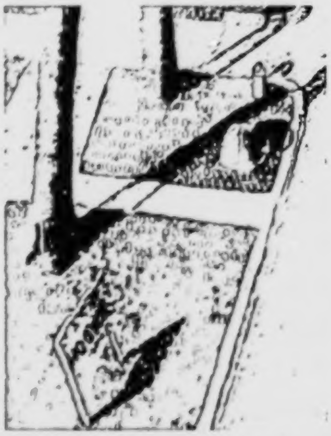
Warm midwestern sunshine illuminates the large family homes, neatly mown lawns, and perfectly clipped trees in the quiet neighborhood surrounding the cottage. A gentle breeze blows laundry hanging near the cottage. In the front, three orange birds fly over a clear blue stream. Beyond them, toylike chickens peck around logs leaning against a red barn, and even farther back, two boys in overalls chat on the sidewalk. A road runs between rows of shade trees on the right, and a golden field, dotted with haystacks, extends beyond the houses on the left.



Detail of brushstrokes from *The Birthplace Of Herbert Hoover, West Branch, Iowa*

Typical of Grant Wood's Regionalist style, everything is neat and regimented, evoking the simplified forms of American folk art. Many tiny straight brushstrokes define the trim lawns, creating a rhythmic pattern across much of the painting, and patterned clumps of enormous autumnal leaves define the trees. Unrealistically, all of the forms, whether close or distant, are bathed in the same clear light and described with the same precise detail.

Warm autumnal colors - browns, golds, oranges, and yellow-greens - dominate Wood's painting. The white siding of the cottage and house create a striking contrast against the golden-green lawn.



Detail of sign and pink rock from *The Birthplace Of Herbert Hoover, West Branch, Iowa*

Hoover's Birthplace

Wood did not re-create the scene as it may have looked at the president's birth. Instead he painted it as the tourist attraction it had become. Upon Hoover's election to the presidency, the ordinary cottage, which had been turned into a kitchen by later owners, began to attract visitors from all over the country. The owner of the cottage charged visitors ten cents for tours of it and set up a souvenir stand. Wood included a sign in front of the house and a pink rock in which the Daughters of the American Revolution had placed a plaque identifying the house as Hoover's birthplace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. **Review the story of Herbert Hoover.**
   What part of the story do you see in Grant Wood's painting?
   Herbert Hoover's birthplace.
   Herbert Hoover was born in West Branch, Iowa, in 1874.
   What clues tell you that this painting shows Hoover's birthplace after he had become famous?
   The sign and tour guide suggest that Hoover had become famous by the time Grant Wood painted this.
   Where are the visitors at this tourist attraction?
   Who is the tour guide pointing the way for? You - the viewer of the painting!

2. **Grant Wood's** STYLE (?) **can be compared to American folk art because of the way he simplified forms in his paintings.**
   What forms did he simplify in this painting? Trees and shrubs are solid round shapes rather than irregular as they are in nature, and the houses are boxlike.

3. **Grant Wood created** PATTERN (?) **in his painting by repeating lines and forms.**
   Where do you see repeated lines? The leaves of the trees and shrubs are made up of regular repeated lines. The lawn is painted with tiny repeated lines.

Where do you see repeated forms that create pattern? Tops of trees, tree trunks and shadows that line the road on the right, rounded forms of shrubs to the left of the bridge, haystacks in the BACKGROUND (?) on the left.

4. **What time of year is it in Grant Wood's painting?** early Autumn.
   How can you tell? Lush greens, some leaves beginning to turn fall colors.
   What time of day is it? Morning.
   How can you tell? Shadows indicate sun is at an angle. Bright light indicates sun is growing stronger rather than fading into evening sunset.

5. **Artists use several** PERSPECTIVE (?) **techniques to give their work the illusion of depth. Which techniques did Grant Wood use?** Objects closest to the viewer appear larger. Objects far away appear smaller and closer to the horizon line [SCALE]; (?) objects closest to the viewer overlap and partially hide objects in the distance [OVERLAP]; (?) objects recede along imaginary lines that meet at a "vanishing point" on the horizon line [LINEAR PERSPECTIVE]. (?)
   Which technique didn't he use? Distant objects have less detail and muted gray-toned colors compared to objects close to the viewer [AERIAL PERSPECTIVE]. (?)

6. **Grant Wood was a** GENRE (?) **painter. He was interested in painting scenes from everyday life in the midwestern United States.**
   What is "everyday" about the scene in this painting? Chickens in the yard, children playing, laundry hanging on the clothesline.
   What is not "everyday?" Tour guide and signage signify an extraordinary place; yard and road excessively neat and ordered.

Think

1. **What popular American myth does Herbert Hoover's story exemplify?** Anyone can grow up to become president of the United States.
   Do you think this myth holds true today? Why or why not?

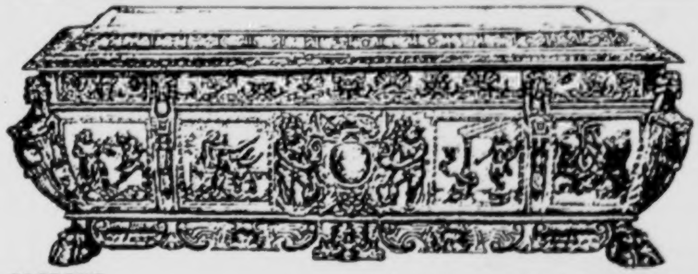
2. **Grant Wood's painting of Herbert Hoover's humble beginnings shows how extraordinary things can happen to ordinary people.**
   Can you think of other ordinary people in American history who were able to make extraordinary achievements? Abraham Lincoln, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Amelia Earhart, George Washington Carver, Howard Hughes... the list is endless!

3. **Grant Wood was a member of a group of American painters called** REGIONALISTS. (?) **These artists tried to show the distinctive characteristics of a region of the United States in their paintings.**
   What particular characteristics of the American Midwest did Grant Wood include in his painting of Herbert Hoover's birthplace? Flat rural landscape, wooden farm buildings, deciduous trees and changing seasons.
   How would his painting look different if Herbert Hoover had been born in the southwest United States? In Colorado? In Florida? Ask students if anyone has traveled to these areas and, if so, describe the landscape.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

4. **Grant Wood and his contemporaries in American art in the 1930s and 1940s were interested in raising ordinary experiences of everyday life to mythic proportions.**
   How did Grant Wood raise everyday life in the town of Herbert Hoover's birthplace to mythic proportions? He made a painting about it!
   Before this particular period of American history, artists and writers did not consider daily life important enough to write about or represent in works of art.
   Can you think of other artists or writers you may have studied whose work focused on daily life? Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, John Steinbeck, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Mark Twain, Gwendolyn Brooks, Edward Hopper, Thomas Hart Benton.

Cassone



CASSONE
About 1600
Walnut
Gift of F. W. Clifford Family

KEY IDEAS

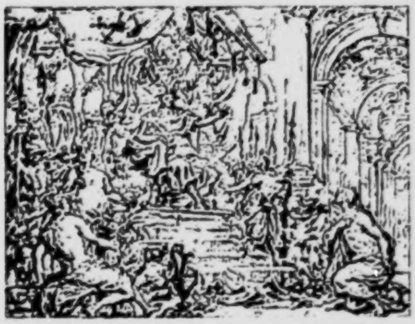
- In Greek mythology Phaeton (FAY-a-tun) was the son of the sun god, Helios (HEEL-ee ohs). His failed attempt to drive his father's chariot across the sky is a warning of caution to impatient young people.
- Italian RENAISSANCE scholars were fascinated with the CLASSICAL past of the ancient Greeks and Romans. They gave Christian meanings to classical myths, including the story of Phaeton.
- The Italian Renaissance STYLE is evident in the classical MOTIFS (moe-TEEFS) and the REALISM of the carved panels on this storage chest, called a *cassone* (cahss-OH-nay).

STORY

Phaeton journeyed east to the sun god's grand royal palace. Helios welcomed his son and, to prove their bond, promised young Phaeton any favor he wished. He did not anticipate that the headstrong boy would ask for permission to drive his powerful chariot by himself for a day. Bound by his promise, Helios had to give in. Just before daybreak Phaeton donned his father's crown made of the sun's rays and stepped into the shining chariot. Sensing unfamiliar hands on the reins, the sun horses thundered off across the sky, veering far off their usual course.

Unrestrained, the horses headed through the northern constellations. Chaos followed. Warmed by the sun for the first time ever, the small and great bears became restless. The usually placid serpent became threatening and the plowman ran away, even though he was not used to moving quickly, because of the weight of his plow. The startled black scorpion prepared to sting Phaeton.

Panicked, Phaeton let go of the reigns and the chariot careened haphazardly through the sky. When it fell too close to the earth, scorching areas into desert, the earth pleaded for help. Zeus (zoose) came to the earth's rescue, hurling a mighty lightning bolt, which shattered the chariot into many pieces. Phaeton tumbled to his death in a river. Mourning for Phaeton, his sisters turned into poplar trees, from which their tears flowed and hardened into drops of amber.



Phaeton asks his Father Helios for the Sun's Chariot
Bernard Picart
18th century
Pen and brown ink with wash over black chalk
The David M. Daniels Fund

BACKGROUND

Phaeton

The Greek story of Phaeton was probably based on older tales that explained eclipses or speculated about the disasters that would result if the sun ever veered from its regular path across the sky. Despite many possible interpretations of Phaeton's story, it is most obviously a metaphor, or symbol story, for the limitless desires - but finite powers - of human beings, especially the youthful ones. The story was elaborated upon by the Roman poet Ovid (AH-vid) in his collection of stories called Metamorphoses. During the Renaissance the story took on an entirely new significance.

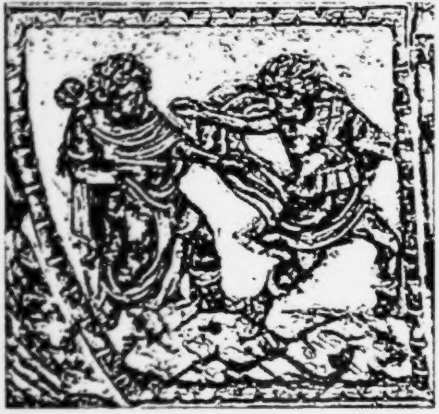
The Italian Renaissance

During the 14th and 15th centuries, many Italian cities became important European centers of industry and trade. Living conditions improved and people became more interested in their earthly existence than with life after death, a significant reversal of the attitudes of their medieval predecessors. The term Renaissance, meaning "rebirth," derives from this renewed interest in life on earth and a new confidence in humankind's potential for achievement. A revival of interest in the art and literature of the ancient Greeks and Romans, which began in the 13th century, contributed to the HUMANISM (?) of Renaissance Italy and greatly influenced its art. Renaissance art became increasing NATURALISTIC (?) as artists studied the classical art of the past and their own world.

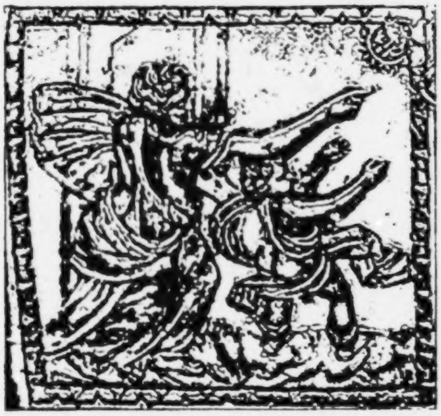
In order to reconcile the pagan classical past with Christian beliefs, Renaissance scholars looked for Christian morals in classical myths whose original meanings were no longer understood. For example, Phaeton's unsuccessful efforts were equated with Lucifer's attempts to get too close to god. Moralizers drew connections between Phaeton's demise and the Old Testament text of Isaiah 14:12 - "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning." Interpreted this way, scenes of Phaeton falling from his chariot were very popular in Renaissance art.

Cassone

This type of chest is usually referred to by its Italian name, *cassone* (cahss-OH-nay). Cassoni (cahss-OH-nee) plural of *cassone* were most often used as marriage chests to hold brides' household linens, every item of which would have been woven by hand and embellished with hand lace or embroidery or other "fancywork." Especially popular from the 14th to the 16th century, cassoni usually featured scenes from the classical mythology so popular at this time. This *cassone* exemplifies the Italian Renaissance style of art, particularly in its attention to the human body, the illusion of realistic spaces achieved through PERSPECTIVE (?) techniques, and its adaptation of classical motifs.



Panel 1 from the *Cassone (Storage Chest)*

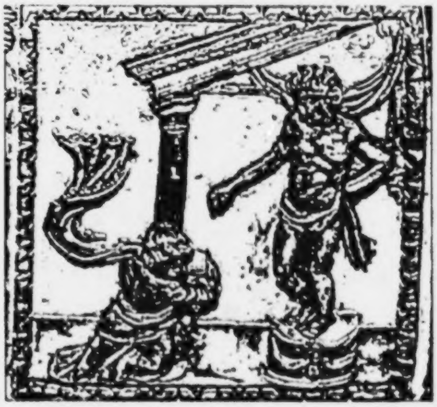


Panel 2 from the *Cassone (Storage Chest)*

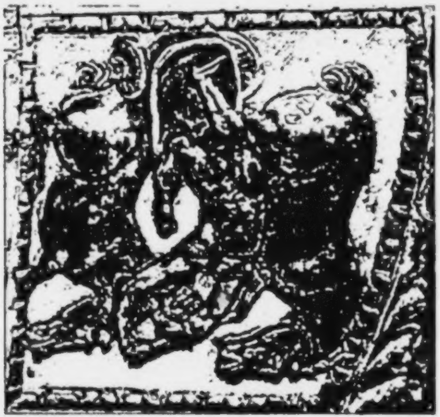
This *cassone* tells the story of Phaeton in four carved panels. The first scene shows young Phaeton cavorting with the child who taunted him. Typical of Renaissance figures, their bodies are turned and their knees are bent to convey a sense of movement. Their windblown drapery enhances the sense of action. Their pseudo-Greek garb and tightly curled hair evoke ancient Greek sculpture. The artist achieved a believable sense of depth by carving the frontmost figure in deeper RELIEF. ?

In the second panel, Phaeton's mother points in the direction of the sun, represented as a stern human face with rays. Phaeton eagerly reaches out toward his father. His partially nude body is babylike, reminiscent of Greek carvings of Cupid. Again, action is achieved with billowing drapery. The artist creates the illusion of space by carving the doorway behind the figures in low relief and by making the distant sun very small.

The third scene shows Phaeton on his knees before his mighty father, who is here represented as a man standing on a decorated platform. The marvelous palace of Helios recalls classical architecture.



Panel 3 from the *Cassone (Storage Chest)*



Panel 4 from the *Cassone (Storage Chest)*

The *cassone's* final panel shows the image of Phaeton most familiar during the Renaissance. Phaeton, now represented as a nude adult, tumbles from the chariot alongside two falling horses. The anatomy of Phaeton and the horses is remarkably well rendered.

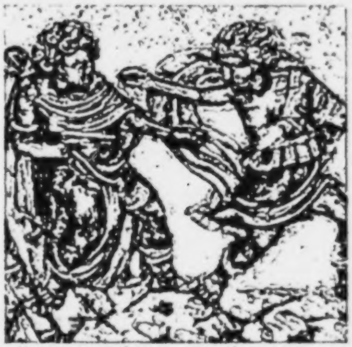
Many adaptations of classical motifs decorate this elaborate *cassone*. On the corners are harpies - monsters with the heads and breasts of women and the wings and claws of birds - which were said to torment misers. Harpies symbolized the deadly sin of greed (avarice) in many Renaissance moral allegories. The five heads punctuating the horizontal band above the main scenes and the single large face at the center bottom of the chest are variations on satyr and gorgon masks. The empty central oval, held up on either side by putti (winged infants), was intended to enclose the coat-of-arms of one of the bride's and groom's families, or possibly of both families combined. One face conceals the key hole in its mouth. Around these faces are anthemia, conventional floral motifs based on the honeysuckle or palmette. The leaves in the narrow band around the lid of the *cassone* are acanthus, another popular classical decoration.

Although this *cassone* was made for a bridal couple, both its shape and its more gruesome motifs (such as the harpies) ultimately derive from ancient Roman stone coffins called sarcophagi (sar-COH-fa-gee). During the late Renaissance period in Italy, there was a widespread taste for excessively ornate furniture with densely packed ornamentation. Wood carvers, particularly in Rome, were heavily influenced by the decoration on surviving antique sarcophagi, as well as by contemporary trends in sculpture and architecture.

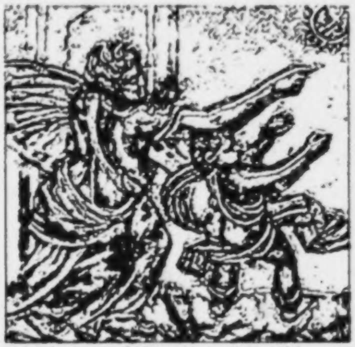
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

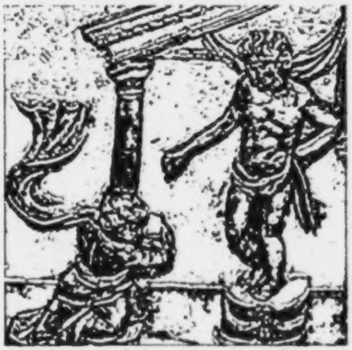
1. Review the story of Phaeton and decide which episodes from the story the artist chose to illustrate in these four panels.



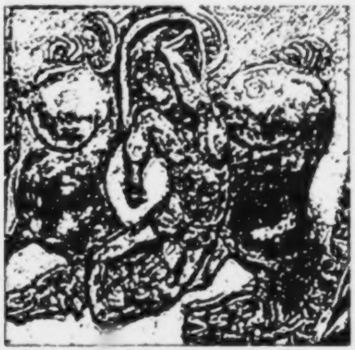
Which part of the story does this panel illustrate? Panel 1: Phaeton being taunted by his playmate



Which part of the story does this panel illustrate? Panel 2: Phaeton and his mother gesturing toward the sun

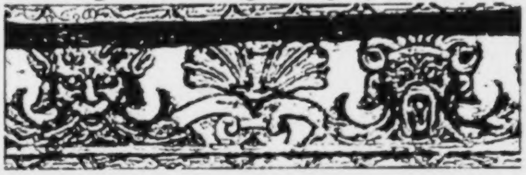


Which part of the story does this panel illustrate? Panel 3: Phaeton kneeling before his father Helios



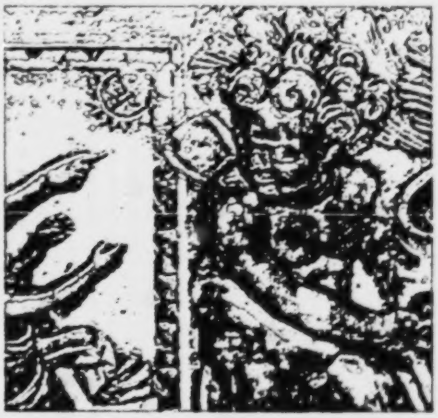
Which part of the story does this panel illustrate? Panel 4: Phaeton tumbling from the chariot alongside two failing horses

2. **The people of the Italian** RENAISSANCE (?) **were fascinated with ancient Greek and Roman cultures.** What clues does the artist give us that the story has Greek origins? (Clothing and tightly curled hair evoke ancient Greek sculpture, and there is Greek architecture in the panel background.) Can you see anything else that reminds you of ancient Greece on this *cassone*? (Answers might include: Figures on the corners of the chest are Greek monsters said to torment misers. Heads above

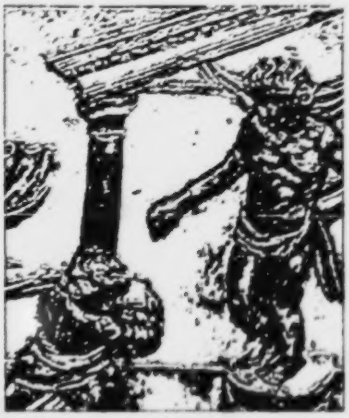


Detail above panels from the *Cassone* (Storage Chest)

the pictorial panels and face at the center bottom of the chest often decorated classical architecture.)



Detail of Panel 2 & to the right of Panel 2 from the *Cassone (Storage Chest)*



Detail of Panel 3 from the *Cassone (Storage Chest)*

3. Italian RENAISSANCE ? artists were very interested in creating the illusion of depth in their work. The artist who carved this *cassone* used OVERLAPPING, ? SCALE ? (the scale of objects far away in a space appear smaller than objects in the foreground), and HORIZON LINES ? to create a sense of deep space.
   What appears farthest from you in each of these panels? The sun in the second panel is smaller than the figures in the foreground.
   Closest to you? The large figure in the second panel is closest to the viewer.
   Where has the artist used overlapping? In each of the panels figures overlap each other or objects.
   Where has the artist used scale to show distance? Where has the artist used a horizon line?

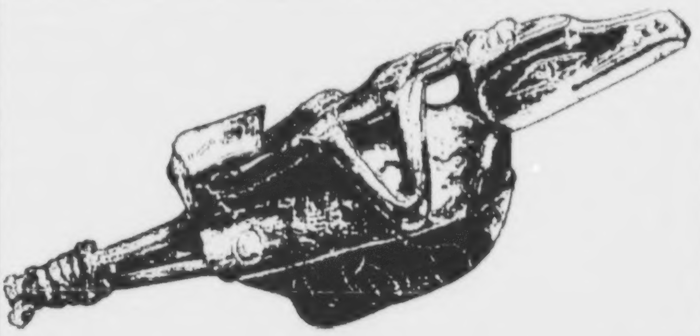
Think

1. The artist who carved this *cassone* chose to represent the story of Phaeton in four scenes from the story. Working in groups of four, think of a story that everyone in your group knows well. What four scenes from the story would you choose to represent? Why? Extension: Illustrate the four scenes, each on a separate piece of paper. Trade your illustrations with another group. Now put the new set of illustrations in their proper sequence. How did you know which came first? Which came last?

2. The story of Phaeton is a story about a boy who "bit off more than he could chew"!
   What does that mean? Taking on more than you're equipped to handle.
   Have you ever bitten off more than you could chew? What happened? How was the problem resolved?

3. Renaissance viewers of this *cassone* would have interpreted the story of Phaeton as a version of a story from the Bible. What experiences from contemporary life does the story evoke for you? Think about popular movie themes, news events, or books.

Chief's Rattle



CHIEF'S RATTLE
19th-20th century
Wood, leather, and haliotis shell
The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund

KEY IDEAS

- Among the Haida (HIGH-da) peoples, rattles in the form of a raven were the exclusive property of high-ranking leaders.
- Raven plays a leading role as both trickster and creator in the stories of many Northwest Coast Indians. One popular story explains how Raven stole daylight and brought it to his people.
- The complex LINEAR (?) design of this rattle is characteristic of Northwest Coast American Indian art.

STORY

In the beginning, the world was dark. The people wondered and argued about something they had heard of, but had never seen - daylight. Some said that the river chief kept daylight in a special box.

Raven lived in the dark world.[1] He was sly, wise, greedy, and meddlesome. And he could change his form to suit his own needs. Raven decided to find out about daylight, so he turned into a hemlock needle and dropped into a freshwater spring. When the river chief's daughter came to the spring to drink, Raven floated into her cup, and she swallowed him. In due time, Raven was born as the grandson of the river chief.

Raven grew very fast and his grandfather adored him, even though he threw tantrums and his eyes looked a little like a raven's. When he screamed, his doting grandfather let him play with the Moon Box. He opened the box and the moon escaped into the sky. When Raven wailed again, his grandfather let him play with the Box of Daylight. As soon as the box was in his possession, Raven changed back into a bird and flew through the smoke hole and disappeared into the darkness.

Raven brought the box to the people and opened it slightly, allowing a few streaks of daylight to escape. But they did not believe he actually had daylight. Angered by the people's skepticism, he threw open the box and flooded the world with the bright light of day.

[1] Some believe that Raven was actually a human being, or even a great chief, who slipped into the skin of a raven when he wanted to be tricky.

BACKGROUND

The Haida

Originally, the Haida people lived on the Queen Charlotte Islands off the coast of present-day British

Columbia. In the early 1700s some of them settled in the southern part of Prince of Wales Island, now part of Alaska. The Haida were fishers who depended largely on halibut and cod for their livelihood.

During the 18th century, Europeans arrived on the Pacific Coast and established fur-trading posts. Soon, Episcopal and Methodist missionaries arrived to convert the Indians. Their conversion to Christianity undermined traditional Haida culture, and disease and alcohol brought by the outsiders

decimated the population. Today, small groups of Haida Indians live in the Masset and Skidgate communities in Canada and at Hydaburg on Prince of Wales Island in Alaska.

Detail of another example of Haida woodcarving

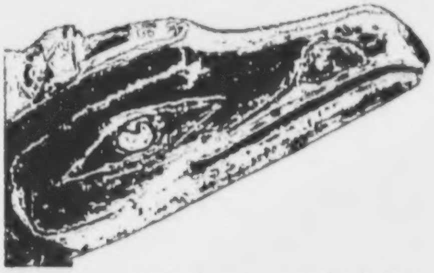
Totem Pole
Haida
After 1850
Wood, malacite, pigments
The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Raven

Raven is one of the most popular characters in Haida mythology. He is said to have created the earth when he tired of flying over a world covered with water. Landforms, tides, the habits of certain animals - all those and more are credited to Raven. In many of the stories, such as the story of daylight, the trickster Raven changes his form.[1]

Raven Rattles

The Haida have long been gifted woodworkers. The men built great houses and the most prized maritime boats along the coast. Haida artists carved totem poles, storage boxes utensils, and rattles in the form of ravens, among other art objects.



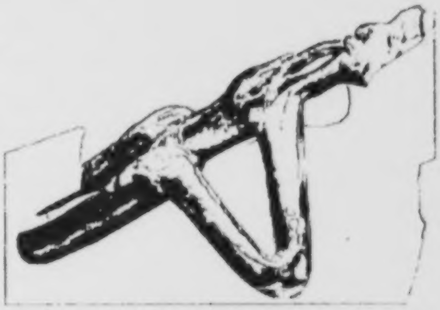
Repeated vertical lines of Raven's beak, mouth, and his diamond-shaped eye emphasize the proud upward thrust of his head. An INLAID **shell forms his shiny opalescent eye.** (?)

Raven rattles take their name from their ravenlike shape. Today, their original purpose and the exact meaning of their complex decoration is no longer known. The first raven rattles may have been powerful instruments used by religious specialists called shamans. However, Haida people who were alive around 1900 said that rattles were the instruments of dancing chiefs[2], part of the elaborate REGALIA (?) they wore for a dance to greet canoes from other villages. Raven rattles are now used only for special occasions.

In this rattle Raven's head thrusts upward and his chest puffs out, forming the body of the rattle. His wings sweep downward along his sides. The repeated vertical lines of Raven's beak, mouth, and his diamond-shaped eye emphasize the proud upward thrust of his head. INLAID (?) shell forms his shiny opalescent eye. Most known raven rattles look much like this one, but they have the additional detail of a small box of daylight held in his beak.

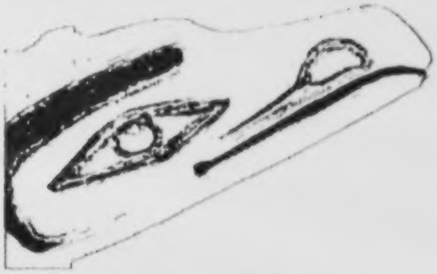
Several birds are evident in this wooden rattle. On Raven's belly is the face of a rather large bird, carved in low RELIEF. (?) The design, barely visible here, may depict a hawk or some other natural being. Another abstracted bird's head faces the rattle handle.

A reclining man rests his head on Raven's head. His long red arms wrap around his drawn-up knees. A long-billed bird bites the man's extended tongue. The meaning of this exchange is unknown, but may suggest the transference of power from one being to the other.


Detail of the figure of a human from the *Chief's Rattle*

The complex linear design of this rattle is characteristic of Northwest Coast Indian art. Each form is tightly integrated into the puzzlelike composition. Strong contour lines define many of the forms, such as the brow, eye, nostril, and beak of Raven. These lines tie the complex imagery together, leading from one form to another to create a rhythmic composition.

The raven rattle was painted with black and bright colors that also structured the design. Over time, much of this pigment has worn away. However, traces of red paint are still visible on the reclining man's arms and on the mouth, cheek, and forehead of the large bird that is also Raven's chest.


Detail of the puzzle-like contour lines from the *Chief's Rattle*

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[1] Raven stories are told by Haida storytellers in John R. Swanton, Haida Texts and Myths, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin, 29 (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1905), pp. 110-150.

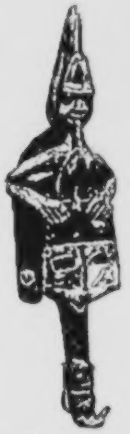
[2] Bill Holm, *The Box of Daylight: Northwest Coast Indian Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983) p. 25.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. Review the story of Raven. Where do you see the Raven on this sculpture? Where is his head? Where are his wings? Where is the human form on the sculpture?
   Which part seems most important? The raven.

2.
   Find these features in this image of another view of the rattle.
   Which part seems most important from this view? The human.


Another view of the *Chief's Rattle*

3. The five different figures that make up this rattle fit together like pieces of a puzzle. Imagine that you have taken this puzzle apart. Would you still be able to identify the figures if they were not attached to one another?

3. GEOMETRIC SHAPES (?) are shapes that come from simple geometry - for example, the circle, square, triangle, and rectangle. ORGANIC SHAPES (?) are irregular shapes.
   Are the shapes that make up this sculpture geometric or organic? Organic.
   Now consider the lines on the sculpture that decorate the organic shapes.

Do these lines form organic or geometric shapes? Geometric.
How has the artist integrated these two different kinds of shapes on this sculpture? The LINEAR ? geometric decorations are placed so that they conform to the organic shapes on which they appear.

Think

1. **Why might the Haida people want to associate with the mythological character of Raven? Recall the story: Raven is associated with Haida creation mythology and possesses the powerful ability to change form.**

2. What other kinds of rattles can you think of? What are they used for? Baby rattles are used to amuse and soothe. Maracas or other rattles are used to mark rhythm in music. A rattlesnake uses a rattle to issue a warning.

3. **Raven is one of the most popular characters in Haida mythology.**
   Can you think of other animal characters that appear frequently in stories that you have heard? The wolf in stories such as the Three Little Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood, Peter and the Wolf. Anansi the Spider is a popular character in West African folktales. Many stories have been written about the mythical unicorn.
   Which other works of art in this image set represent animals in mythology?

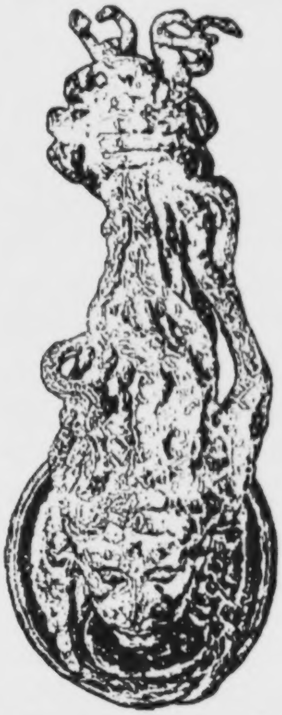
Woman's Dress
United States. 20th Century A.D.

Dragon Robe for an Empress of China
China. 19th Century A.D.

Malagan Pole
Papua New Guinea (New Ireland). 19th Century A.D.

4. **The artist who carved the raven rattle painted it with black and bright colors that helped to structure the design of the decorations on the rattle. You may see some traces of the paint still on the rattle, but most of it has worn away.**
   Do you think it is possible to appreciate the rattle as a work of art even though we can't see it as the artist originally intended it to appear? No right answer.
   Challenge: You are the curator of a museum's collection of American Indian art.
   Should you display this rattle as it is, without its original painted colors, or should you attempt to repaint the rattle in order to display it as the artist intended? No right answer.

Door Knocker in Form of Medusa



DOOR KNOCKER IN FORM OF MEDUSA
1925
Emile-Antoine Bourdelle
Bronze
Gift of Atherton and Winifred W. Bean

KEY IDEAS

- The story of Perseus (PURR-see-us) slaying the snake-haired Gorgon Medusa (meh-DOO-sa) is one of many Greek monster-slayer myths celebrating the victory of good over evil.

- Ancient Greeks decorated buildings with images of Medusa to ward off evil. This Medusa was also made to decorate a building, but it's less than 100 years old.

- While the facial features of this door knocker recall early Greek sculpture, the curvilinear snakes reflect the decorative Art Nouveau (new-VOE) STYLE ? that was popular in Europe around 1900.

STORY

Polydectes (pol-ee-DECK-teez), evil king of the island of Seriphos (SERR-i-fos), fell madly in love with a beautiful woman named Danae (DAN-eye). He wanted to marry Danae, but wanted nothing to do with her adult son, Perseus. Hoping to get rid of Perseus, Polydectes ruthlessly tricked the young man into brashly undertaking a deadly mission - to bring him the head of a dreaded monster called Medusa.

Medusa was one of three fearsome Gorgon sisters who lived far away in a secret hiding place. The sisters had brass claws, golden wings, boars' tusks, and masses of hissing snakes for hair. Anyone who looked into their frightful faces instantly turned into stone.

Fortunately, the gods Athena (a-THEE-na) and Hermes (HER-meez), as well as three nymphs, offered to help Perseus. Athena gave him a shiny bronze shield and Hermes gave him a sword that could not be bent by the Gorgons' scales. The nymphs gave Perseus winged shoes so that he could fly, a cap that made him invisible, and a pouch in which to carry the Gorgon's head.

Perseus flew first to the home of the aged ones. These three women, who were sisters to the Gorgons, were born with gray hair and shared a single eye and tooth between them. Wearing his cap of invisibility, Perseus snatched the eye as one sister passed it to another. Threatening to keep the eye, Perseus coerced them into revealing the Gorgon's secret hiding place.

Perseus arrived at the cave of the Gorgons, where, by good fortune, they were all asleep. In order to see Medusa without turning to stone, Perseus located her grotesque face in a reflection on his shiny shield. He swiftly cut off her head, dropped it into his bag, and fled from Medusa's angry sisters. When Perseus returned to Seriphos, the evil Polydectes laughed at him and asked what was in his sack. Perseus pulled out the horrifying head of Medusa and turned Polydectes to stone.[1]

Medusa's severed head retained its power to turn people into stone, so Perseus carried it on many adventures, using it to defeat his enemies. Eventually, in gratitude for her protection, Perseus gave Medusa's head to Athena, who placed it on her breastplate to ward off evil.

[1] From Medusa's bleeding neck sprang two horses: Pegasus (the immortal winged horse) and Chrysaor, father of the infamous Geyron (a monster with three bodies, later killed by Hercules).

BACKGROUND

Medusa

Perseus's story is one of many Greek monster-slayer myths that features the theme of good outwitting evil. Since at least the 6th century B.C., Greeks placed images of Medusa's terrifying head on shields and buildings in order to frighten away enemies and evil spirits.

According to 4th-century B.C. revisions of her story, Medusa was a beautiful woman who was turned into a monster by jealous Athena. At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, writers and artists popularized this image of Medusa as a beautiful young woman.

French Sculpture

No single style dominated French sculpture at the turn of the century. Sculptors worked in NATURALISTIC, (?) expressionistic, and ABSTRACT (?) symbolic styles. In response to the popular appeal of the consciously decorative Art Nouveau style, many artists sought subjects that allowed them to incorporate its organic forms and long, sinuous curves into their art.

Emile-Antoine Bourdelle

Emile-Antoine Bourdelle (ay-MEEL an-TWAN boor-DELL) was an eclectic sculptor who drew upon a number of the diverse trends of his time, including elements of the Art Nouveau style. He drew most heavily upon the organic qualities of French Medieval cathedral sculpture and the simple forms of early Greek sculpture. Motivated by his conviction that history's greatest sculptures were those integrated with architecture, Bourdelle created many of his sculptures for architectural settings.

Door Knocker in Form of Medusa

In this bronze door knocker, Bourdelle depicts the severed head of Medusa, hanging from Perseus's clenched fist. Above his hand a bunch of snakes writhe, striking out as if they are going to attack. Below, only a few of Medusa's many braids actually look like scaly snakes.

As was popular at the turn of the century, Bourdelle represents Medusa as a beautiful young woman rather than the horrible monster of the original story. Her facial features - high cheekbones, narrow nose, square chin, and the corners of her small mouth - consciously recall the expressively modeled faces of early Greek sculptures of young women. The dominant curves of her hair, however, reflect the popular Art Nouveau style.

Bourdelle's clever transformation of Medusa into an ornamental door knocker attests to his commitment to integrating sculpture and architecture. Two entwined braids extend from ear to ear to create the knocker's handle. When lifted up and then let go, Medusa's head would knock against the circular form behind it. Bourdelle produced ten casts of this door knocker, an indication that he designed it for a general market rather than for a specific door.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. **Review the story of Perseus and Medusa.**
   Where do you see Perseus in this bronze sculpture? The hand holding the head of Medusa is Perseus's hand.
   Where do you see snakes? Medusa's hair, above Perseus's hand.
   According to the story, what would happen if you saw this scene in real life? You would turn to stone!

2. **This bronze sculpture had a special purpose.**
   Can you tell what it was used for? A door knocker.
   Where is the handle? Two braids extending from Medusa's ears loop down under her head to form the handle.
   What part of this sculpture is the knocker? Medusa's head knocks against the circle behind it.
   How can you tell? The handle is attached to the head.

3. **According to the original story of Perseus and Medusa, Medusa was so grotesquely ugly that anyone who looked at her would turn to stone. 4th-century B.C. revisions of the story cast Medusa as a beautiful young woman. Which version of the story do you think this 20th century artist was influenced by? What do you see that makes you say that?**

4. **When Bourdelle made this door knocker, Art Nouveau was a popular** STYLE. ? **Sculpture created in the Art Nouveau style is characterized by long elegant curves.**
   Where do you see long elegant curves in the door knocker? Medusa's hair.

Think

1. **The ancient Greeks placed images of Medusa's head on their buildings. Bourdelle made Medusa's head into a door knocker.** Why do you think Medusa was a popular image for buildings?
   Recall how Perseus and then Athena used Medusa's head to protect them from their enemies.
   Medusa provided protection for the inhabitants of buildings, much as she provided protection for Perseus and Athena.

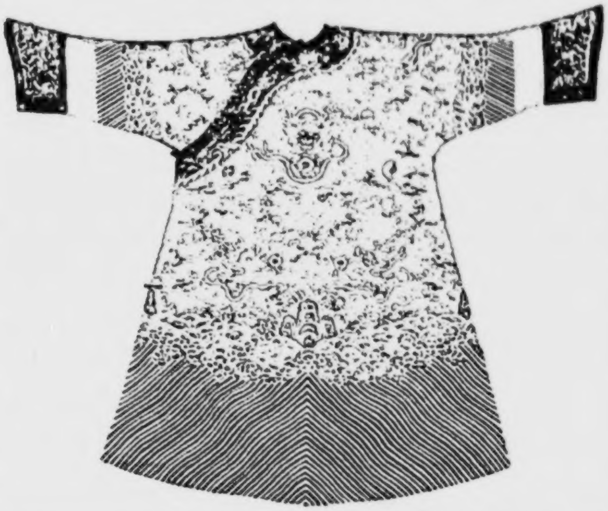
2. **This imposing brass door knocker is almost 23 inches high. Describe the kind of door you might hang it on. A bathroom door? An apartment door? Why or why not?**
   How big would a door have to be to accommodate this door knocker? Very large - even the front door of an average family home would be too small to accommodate it.

3. **Bourdelle believed that history's greatest sculptures were those integrated with architecture. His transformation of Medusa into an ornamental door knocker illustrates his conviction. Where have you seen examples of sculpture integrated with architecture in your neighborhood? In places you have visited? Describe them.**

Dragon Robe for an Empress of China

KEY IDEAS

- In Chinese mythology the dragon has the power to bring rain.
- The dragon frequently appears on Chinese court robes as a SYMBOL of the emperor's power to mediate between heaven and earth.
- In keeping with the strict dress codes of the Ch'ing (ching) dynasty, the color, cut, and symbolic decoration of this empress's *dragon robe* indicate that its wearer is royalty.



DRAGON ROBE FOR AN EMPRESS OF CHINA
1821-50 (Ch'ing dynasty)
Embroidered silk, gold thread
The John R. Van Derlip Fund

STORY

T'ang (tong) dynasty emperor visited the Chinese city of Loyang (low-yang) during a long spell of very hot, dry weather. There, in a temple, lived an Indian priest named Wu Wei (woo way), who knew how to call forth the dragon who brings rain. The emperor begged Wu Wei to bring rain to his scorched land, but the priest refused. The heat was seasonable, he said, and summoning the dragon would do much damage. The emperor said that the people were suffering because of the drought. Any rain, he pleaded, even if accompanied by roaring winds and crashing thunder, would be good. Finally Wu Wei agreed.

Wu Wei ordered the removal of everything from the temple, except for one bowl of water. Stirring the water, he repeated magical words hundreds of times. Presently, a red finger-sized dragon appeared, raising its head slightly above the water's surface. Then it slowly disappeared. Wu wei stirred the water again, chanting a spell three times. From the bowl a white vapor rose several feet into the air and floated toward the temple door.

"Go," Wu Wei ordered the emperor's messenger, "for the rain is coming!" As he fled to alert the emperor, the messenger glanced back to see the vapor roll like white silk out of the temple. Then darkness fell, bringing with it thunder and rain. Gale winds uprooted giant trees along the road as the storm overtook the terrified messenger. At last he reached the emperor, drenched but safe.[1]

[1] This story was first told in *Ci Liushi Jiu Wen* (Old records of the younger Liu) and written down by Li Deyu, also of the T'ang Dynasty. This version is based on Evangeline D. Edward's translation in *Chinese Prose Literature of the T'ang Period* (London, 1938) I, p. 93, who took it from *Tangshui Congshu*, ed. Wang Wenhe (Shanghai, 1806) I, bk. V, 5b-6.

BACKGROUND

Dragons

The Chinese dragon was a divine bringer of rain, necessary for the good of all. The dragon was also a symbol of the good emperor whose wisdom and divine power assured the well-being of his subjects. Many legends draw connections between the dragon and the emperor. Some emperors even claimed to have descended from the dragon.[1] For others, dragons were special protectors.[2]

Chinese dragons could make themselves as large as the universe or as small as a silkworm. They could also change color and disappear in a flash. Dragons were rarely seen because they cleverly hid in caves burrowed into the lofty mountains, or coiled up on the bottom of the deepest seas. Any sighting of a dragon boded well - it meant that Heaven was letting the people know that their ruler was doing a good job. Obviously, rulers were eager to hear of any reports of dragons in their domain.

Ch'ing Dynasty

In 1644, the nomadic Manchu (man-CHEW) warriors from northern China overthrew China's Ming rulers and established the Ch'ing dynasty. The Manchu admired and quickly adopted the culture and government of the native Chinese they had conquered. Still, in their official clothing styles, the Manchu emphasized their own distinctive cultural heritage. Inspired by the riding garments of their nomadic days, Ch'ing robes had long tapered sleeves, tight cuffs, narrow neck openings, side closures, and slit skirts. Although the cut was new, Ch'ing robes were decorated with symbols from traditional Chinese mythology, most notably the dragon.

Everyone who attended and served at court during the Ch'ing dynasty wore symbolic robes. Rank and status within the court were indicated by the cut, color, and symbolic decoration of one's robe. The highest rank was that of emperor, empress, or empress dowager. Only these individuals were allowed to wear yellow robes bearing the five-toed dragon MOTIF (?) (moe-TEEF).[3]

Dragon Robe

This type of semiformal court robe is called ch'i-fu (chee-foo), which translates as "festive dress." The color and cut indicate that this robe was worn by an empress.

Description

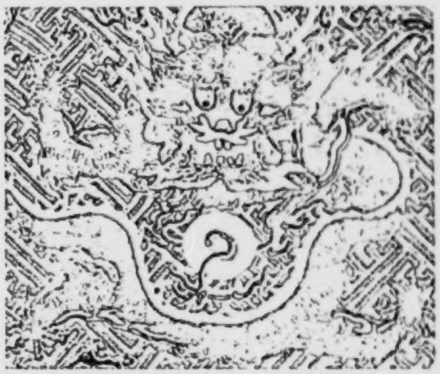
The dragon on this robe (see detail) is a distinctive type associated with the imperial house. Its wide, flat head is topped by horns and flanked by wiry whiskers. Scales and sharp spines cover its curving body. Five short legs with powerful claws emerge from the dragon's snakelike torso. Flames spark outward from its joints. The dragon tosses a flaming pearl between its claws.

The dragon cavorts in a celestial landscape above a rainbow-hued diagonal ocean whose frothy waves crash against three rocky mountains that represent the earth.

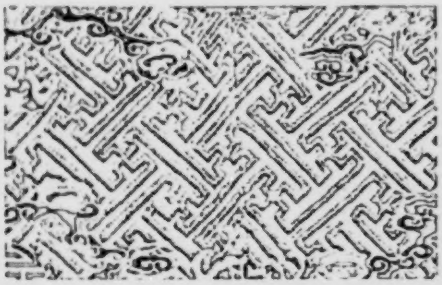
The heavens are represented by a band of colorful STYLIZED, (?) stringy clouds that curl on top of the waves and float up in little ovals through the robe.

Symbols

The dragon is the centerpiece of an elaborate set of images that symbolize the emperor's authority as an intermediary in the universal order between heaven and earth. The great and beneficial power of the dragon could be brought to the people by the good governance of the emperor. The pearl within the dragon's grasp is a symbol of wisdom. Like a worthy emperor, the dragon always seeks wisdom.



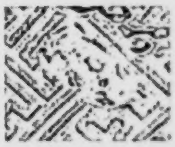
Detail of pearl in dragon's grasp from the *Dragon Robe for an Empress of China*



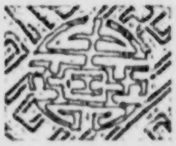
Detail of swastikas from the *Dragon Robe for an Empress of China*

Many symbols of good luck and power surround the dragon. The whole BACKGROUND ? is embroidered with an intricate PATTERN ? of connected bright blue swastikas. In China the swastika symbolized good luck and the number 10,000. Thus any symbol of blessing laid against it is multiplied 10,000 times.

Several red bats fly through the heavens below the dragon. Bats were considered emblems of longevity and happiness because the words for happiness and bat sound similar. To either side of the dragon's head are red stylized shou (show) characters. They wish long life for the robe's wearer.



Detail of one red bat from the *Dragon Robe for an Empress of China*



Detail of one red shou character from the *Dragon Robe for an Empress of China*

[1] The emperor Yao was said to be the son of a red dragon. The dragon had come to his mother bearing an inscription on his back indicating that she would receive Heaven's blessing. A great darkness and wind whipped around her on all sides. The dragon touched her and she became pregnant. Fourteen months later she gave birth to Yao.

[2] According to one myth, during the time of great rebellion, the T'ang emperor Ming Huang had to flee from the capital. The previous evening a small dragon arose from a pond ready to help the emporer escape by boat. The dragon carried the emperor's boat on its back to safety. Ming Huang was very grateful. He thanked it and gave wine.

[3] If these robes at first seem to us very ornate, we must remember that they are robes of state, worn in the imperial court and its temples and theatres. They can be compared to the robes worn for a royal coronation in Westminster Abbey.

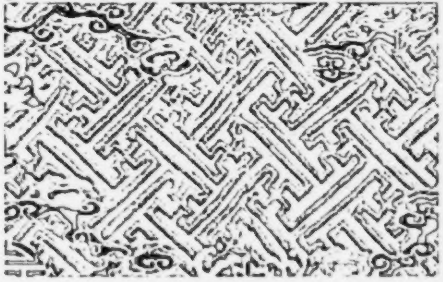
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. Tell the story of Wu Wei and the dragon. The dragon frequently appears on Chinese court robes like this one as a SYMBOL ? for the emperor's power to mediate between heaven and earth for the well-being of the people.

What is a symbol? Something that stands for or represents another thing or idea.
Where are dragon symbols on this robe? Center, lower left and right, left and right shoulders, tiny dragons on sleeve borders.
How did the emperor mediate between heaven and earth in this story? He persuaded a priest to summon a dragon in order to bring rain.

2. **This *dragon robe* is covered with** SYMBOLS (?) **that stand for the emperor's authority to mediate between heaven and earth.**
   Find multicolored lines that represent "standing water." Hem and sleeves of the robe.
   Find frothy ocean waves. Semicircles above the diagonal stripes.
   Find three prism-shaped rock formations that symbolize mountains. Above the ocean waves.
   Find colorful stringy clouds that float throughout the robe. The Chinese word for happiness and bat sound similar.
   Find red bats that symbolize happiness. Red bats fly through the sky below the central dragon.
   Find the round red shou character, a symbol of long life. Scattered throughout the area surrounding the dragons.
   Find three pearls that symbolize wisdom. White circles with red flames held by each of the three central dragons. See also THINK 1.


Detail of swastikas from the *Dragon Robe for an Empress of China*

3. PATTERN (?) **can be made up of any repeated elements such as line, shape, or color.**
   What pattern do you see on the BACKGROUND of this robe? Bright blue connecting lines that make a background for other SYMBOLS. (?)
   Do these lines look familiar to you? Point out the swastika in the pattern and explain that in traditional Chinese culture it symbolizes luck and the number 10,000.

4. How are the symbols and patterns applied? EMBROIDERY: (?) the technique of hand sewing decorative designs on fabric with needle and silk thread.
   How can you tell? Thread creates tiny lines within each design, uneven edges of designs show where the thread has gone through the fabric.

5. **During the Chinese Ch'ing dynasty, everyone who served the Emperor at court wore special robes. Rank and status within the court were indicated by the cut, color, and** SYMBOLIC (?) **decoration of these robes. The emperor, empress, and empress dowager (emperor's mother) wore yellow robes with five-clawed dragons. The crown prince wore apricot yellow, while the imperial princes wore blue or brown. Officials of the first through third ranks dressed in blue robes with nine dragons. Officials of the fourth through sixth ranks wore blue robes with eight four-clawed dragons.**
   Who wore this *dragon robe*? The emperor, empress, or empress dowager. The colors and the cut of this particular robe indicate that it was worn by the empress.

Think

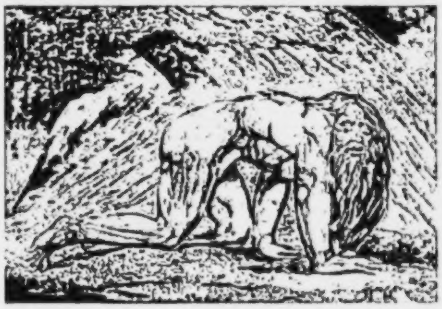
1. **Make a list on the board of all the** SYMBOLS (?) **and their meanings discussed in LOOK.**

2. **Chinese dragons were magical, mythical animals that could make themselves as large as the universe or as small as a silkworm. They could change color and disappear in a flash. Dragons were rarely seen because they hid in caves or at the bottom of the sea. Any sighting of a dragon foretold happiness and good fortune.**
   Can you think of other magical, mythical characters who bring good luck and good fortune? Leprechauns, fairies, elves, angels, a genie in a lamp.

3. **The symbols on this *dragon robe* are associated with the emperor's authority to intermediate between heaven and earth.**
   Which of the symbols are related to earth? Water, waves, and mountains.
   Which of the symbols are related to the heavens? Clouds, bats, and dragons.
   Are the shou character for long life and the pearls symbolizing wisdom related to heaven and/or earth? No.
   Why do you think they appear on the robe? They are related to qualities desirable in an emperor.

4. Contrast the story of this emperor with Nebuchadnezzar. The Chinese emperor sought rain for his drought, while Nebuchadnezzar ignored the needs of his people. Talk about the responsibility of rulers.rulers.responsibility of rulers.

5. **The blue swastika pattern that makes up the background of this robe is symbolic of good luck and the number 10,000. Why do you think a symbol for 10,000 appears on the empress's robe? Explain that any symbol of blessing laid against the swastika is multiplied 10,000 times.**

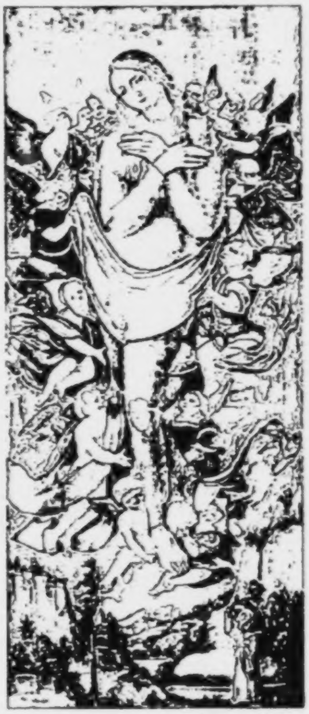


Nebuchadnezzar
William Blake
1795
Color print finished in pen and watercolor
Miscellaneous purchase funds

The Elevation of the Magdalen

KEY IDEAS

- Since the Middle Ages, the Christian story of Mary Magdalene demonstrated that through repentance forgiveness was possible.
- During the Middle Ages and RENAISSANCE, (?) the Christian saints were popular role models. As such, they frequently appeared in large altarpiece paintings.
- The IDEALIZED (?) beauty of Mary Magdalene as well as the REALISTIC (?) details in this TEMPERA (?) painting are typical of northern European art during the 16th century.



THE ELEVATION OF THE MAGDALEN
The Elevation of the Magdalen
Peter Strüb the Younger (Master of Messkirch)
16th century
Tempera on panel
The Bergmann Richards Memorial Fund and the Fiduciary Fund

STORY

Mary Magdalene, her sister, Martha, and her brother, Lazarus, were set adrift in a rudderless open boat by some people who did not share their belief in the Christian messiah, Jesus. They floated for many days and nights until the wind and waves carried them to the shores of Provence in southern France.[1] The local people did not share the beliefs of the castaways and refused them food and shelter. The tattered group finally found refuge in a pagan temple. There, Mary and Martha preached the word of Jesus, performed miracles, and converted thousands of the people to their faith.

Mary regretted many of the things she had done in her youth. Wishing to repent, she devoted herself to a life of solitary contemplation in the wilderness. For thirty years she lived as a hermit in a cave prepared for her by angels. Over time, her clothes rotted away and her hair grew and grew until it covered her entire body.

The artist chose to depict an event in the last years of Mary's life. A host of angels lifted her to heaven seven times a day, allowing her a glimpse of eternal bliss.[2] One day a hermit witnessed the event and brought news of it to the nearby city of Marseilles. Mary then died and her soul rose to heaven. After her death, Mary continued to perform miracles for those who prayed to her.

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[1] According to an earlier version of this legend (current in the East around 700 AD), the group was put out to sea in a rudderless boat, landing miraculously in Cyprus, where Lazarus became a bishop.

[2] At this point the story is crossed with another Mary, St. Mary of Egypt, a penitent prostitute who retired to the desert in solitude. There her clothes fell to pieces, but her hair grew so thickly that she was covered by it. After 47 years in the desert, she received Holy Communion from a monk and died.

BACKGROUND

Mary Magdalene

It is difficult to establish the real history of Mary Magdalene, who is apparently the conflation of three different women named Mary who are described in episodes of the New Testament as among the devoted followers of Christ. It is possible, although improbable, that she was the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who lived in Bethany.[1] Mary Magdalene is referred to in Mark's gospel in the Bible's New Testament as the woman from whom Jesus cast seven devils (16:9). Mark also identifies her as one of three Marys who anoint Jesus' body after his crucifixion (16:1), and as the first person Jesus sees after his resurrection (16:9). Later traditions identified her as the unnamed prostitute described in Luke's gospel who was forgiven her sins by Jesus, after she washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair (7:36).[2] During the Middle Ages, Mary Magdalene came to exemplify the faithful and repentant sinner. She stood as a message to Catholic believers that no one, except the devil, is beyond forgiveness and redemption. By 1500, during the age of the Counter Reformation, pictures of Mary Magdalene came to represent the Roman Catholic Church itself, whose excesses could also be forgiven through Christ's love.

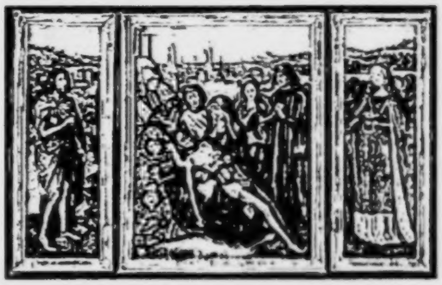
Saints

During the Middle Ages many legends sprang up about the later life of "the Magdalene," as she came to be called, all without any factual foundation or Biblical reference. The Elevation legend is one of these. The most influential and widely circulated version of Mary Magdalene's work, exile, and death was the one recounted in a popular 13th-century collection of stories called The Golden Legend by Jacobus de Voragine (ja-KOH-bus duh ve-RAJ-i-nee). The Golden Legend was essentially a layperson's version of the lectionaries, or lives of the saints, which were read on each saint's feast day during the year. As an archbishop of Genoa, Voragine was familiar with these texts known chiefly to church clerks.[3]

The saints - the heroes of the Middle Ages and Renaissance - were role models of perfection, possessing divine wisdom, super strength, and unwavering devotion. These exemplars of Christian virtues frequently appeared in altarpiece paintings, inspiring worshipers to emulate their behavior.

The Elevation of the Magdalen

Peter Strüb's (stroob) painting *The Elevation Elevation of the Magdalen* shows Mary, covered with hair, being lifted up by 14 angels. A golden halo surrounds her idealistically youthful face, which shows no signs of her 30-year stay in the wilderness. Her abundantly flowing red hair is a common ATTRIBUTE, (?) referring to her humble drying of Jesus' feet. Far less typical is the animal-like fur that covers much of her idealized body. Mary folds her hands over her chest, which is not covered by fur. Her knees are also exposed, all hair evidently worn away from kneeling in constant prayer. The angels discreetly cover her lower abdomen with a crisply draped cloth. From the mountainous landscape below, a priest looks up at the miraculous vision.



Lamentation with panels of Saint John and Saint Catherine
Master of the Legend of Saint Lucy
Oil on panel, c. 1490
Bequest of John R. Van Derlip in Memory of Ethel Morrison Van Derlip

Style

Peter Strüb's tempera painting *The Elevation of the Magdalen* is for the most part typical of German Renaissance art. The flat gold BACKGROUND, (?) a characteristic feature of medieval art, remained a popular tradition in religious painting well into the Renaissance. The gold suggests that the subject is holy and bathed in heavenly light. By contrast, the detailed landscape below Mary is very much a part of the earthly realm. Typical of German painters of his era who rendered their native landscape in great detail, Strüb painted Mary Magdalene in a mountainous German landscape, rather than in southern France. Fine realistic details abound, from the leafy trees and craggy rocks to the individual hairs of Mary's fur suit and the soft feathers of the angels' wings. This attention to detail is one of the most characteristic traits of German Renaissance art.

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[1] Mary Magdalene's name indicates that she came from another town, variously called "Magdala" or "Magadan" or "Migdal" on the sea of Galilee.

[2] The conflation of three women into one, that one being Mary Magdalene, is rejected by the Eastern Orthodox church, which believes the women to be three distinct persons. However, in the Western church, Pope Gregory the Great (540-604) declared them to be one woman, and this identity has persisted, despite being refuted by the theologian St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) and others.

[3] Over the centuries scholars and theologians repeatedly criticized the *Golden Legend* for its biased and inaccurate approach to biographical history. However, the book remained popular, and was republished and translated for centuries. Artists mined it for themes and information.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. **Review the story of Mary Magdalene.**
   What parts of the story do you see in this painting? A priest witnesses a host of angels lifting Mary up to heaven.
   How can you tell it's a priest? Ecclesiastic clothing.
   How can you tell they are angels? Wings.
   How many angels are there? Fourteen.

2. **Attention to details is one of the most characteristic traits of German** RENAISSANCE (?) **art.**
   What details has this artist carefully described? Mary's hair, the folds of angels' costumes, angels' wings, leaves and rocks in landscape.

3. **Below Mary is a detailed** NATURALISTIC (?) **landscape.**
   Does the sky behind her look similarly naturalistic? No. BACKGROUND (?) is covered with GOLD LEAF. (?)
   Why might an artist use gold on a background? Gold was often used in religious painting to indicate a sacred subject and to reflect light in the dark environment of a church.

4. **Strüb and his contemporaries during the German** RENAISSANCE (?) **sought to** IDEALIZE (?) **their subjects. They believed that artists should strive to represent perfection even if that perfection was absent in real nature. How has Strüb idealized his subject? Clue: The story of Mary Magdalene tells us she lived in a cave for 30 years before angels daily lifted her toward heaven! Does Mary look as if she lived in a cave for 30 years in this painting? Why not?**

Think

1. During the Middle Ages, Mary Magdalene served as a reminder to Catholics that every one may be forgiven. Have you ever regretted anything you have done? Were you forgiven? How? What happened? Have you ever forgiven someone else?

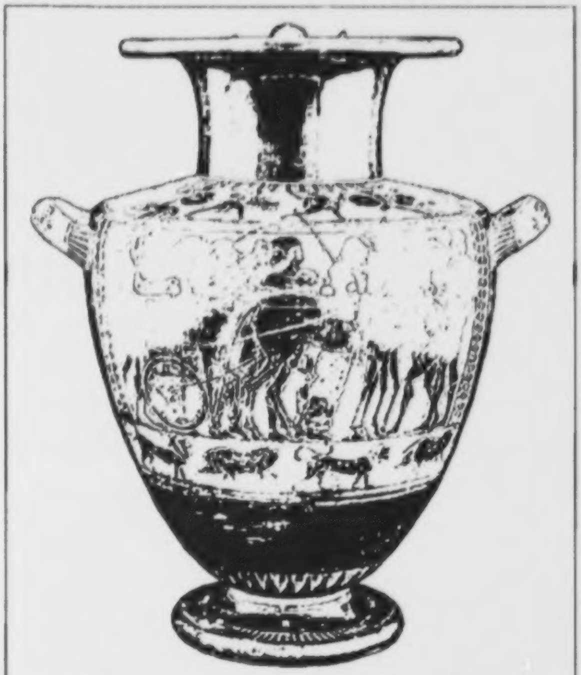
2. Strüb painted Mary in a German landscape rather than the landscape of southern France, where she lived, according to this myth.
   Why might he have done this? Although we don't know for sure, Strüb may not have known the landscape of southern France. He also may have wanted to associate his homeland with a holy event.

3. During the Middle Ages, many people looked to the saints as behavioral role models. Who are your role models? Do pictures of your role models exist? Where?

Hydria

KEY IDEAS

- To the people of ancient Greece, the hero Herakles (HAIR-a-kleez) embodied the best of mortal human beings and Gods. Stories of his accomplishments were very popular.
- This black-figure vase, called a *hydria* (high-DREE-a), is a good example of the qualities of harmony and SYMMETRY, highly prized by the Greeks in their art.
- The Greeks thought of their gods as humans, as the paintings on this *hydria* show.

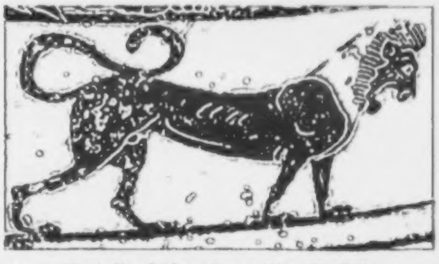


HYDRIA
Antimenes painter
530-500 B.C.
Terra-cotta
The John R. Van Derlip Fund

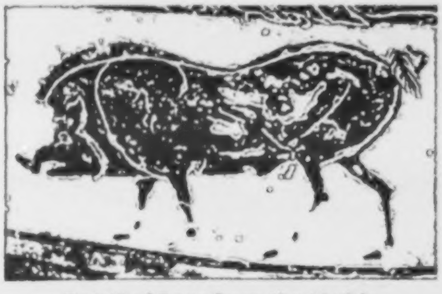
STORY

Herakles was the son of the great god Zeus (zoose) and a mortal human, Alcmene (alk-MEE-nee). Zeus had tricked Alcmene by coming to her disguised as her husband. Zeus's wife, Hera, was so jealous of her husband's love for Alcmene that she made Herakles' life miserable. When Herakles was a grown man with a family of his own, Hera sent madness upon him and drove him to kill his entire family. He went to the ORACLE at Delphi (DEL-fie) to seek penance for his horrific crime.[1] The oracle told him that he had to go see the king of Mycenae (my-SEE-nee) and do whatever the king told him to do. When he completed the deeds, his sins would be forgiven.

The king of Mycenae first ordered Herakles to kill the Nemean (nee-MEE-un) lion that had been threatening a nearby village for many years. The village people told him it could not be killed by weapon or arrow. Herakles tried to shoot the lion, but his arrows could not wound the beast. Finally, he wrestled the lion to the ground and strangled it with his hands. He kept the skin as proof and wore it as a cloak, which gave him even greater strength.



Detail of Lion from the *Hydria*



Detail of Boar from the *Hydria*

Herakles' second task was to capture a savage boar from the mountain of Erymanthus (err-a-MAN-thus). Herakles trapped the fearsome boar and brought it back alive to the king to prove he had accomplished his task. The king was so frightened by the beast that he ran and hid in a bronze jar.

Much to everyone's amazement, Herakles went on to successfully complete ten more seemingly impossible tasks. Because of him, many people lived without fear. Zeus was so impressed by Herakles' strength, courage, and hard work that he made him a god. Athena (a-THEE-na) the goddess of war, wisdom, and the arts, came down from Mount Olympus (OH-limp-US) in her chariot to carry Herakles to live among the gods.

BACKGROUND

Herakles

Parts of Herakles' story are probably based on the life of a historical figure, while other parts seem to be taken from the myths of other eastern Mediterranean countries. In Greek mythology, the hero Herakles personified physical strength and courage. His repeated triumphs over evil, particularly his successful completion of the 12 labors, earned him god status. Throughout the ancient Greek world, Herakles was worshiped as a protector.[1]

Another example of a Greek hydria vase.
Black-Figure Hydria (Water Jar) with scenes of Herakles Painted in the manner of the Antimenes Painter
Greek, Attic, late Archaic Period, ca. 520-510 B.C.
Terracotta.
Carlos Collection of Ancient Greek Art. 1984.8

History

Herakles was the most popular hero in 6th-century Athens, even though none of his exploits was performed there. He appears frequently on Athenian vases. Herakles' popularity was due in part to his association with Athena, the patron goddess of Athens. She protected Herakles against the evil doings of Hera.

In his efforts to gain control of Athens, a 6th-century tyrant named Peisistratus (pie-sis-trot-us) took advantage of the well-known relationship between Athena and Herakles. He wanted people to think of him as a modern Herakles-strong, unbeatable, and heroic, so he staged a chariot procession to the Acropolis (a-CROP-a-lus), pretending to be Herakles. Seated beside him was a woman dressed up as Athena. This event inspired many vase paintings of Herakles' journey with Athena to Olympus, including scenes of Athena with her chariot.

Antimenes Painter

The Antimenes (an-TIM-en-eez) painter painted many images of Herakles and Athena together, responding to public demand. Although many Athenian vase painters did not sign their work, art historians can identify them by certain traits that recur in their paintings. This vases's theme, extensive use of white, and composition helped art historians to identify the artist as the Antimenes painter. He signed the name Antimenes painter to only a few of the 150 vases attributed to him.

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[1] The Delphic oracle (called the Pythia) was consulted in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi on various matters — economic, political, religious and personal. When presented with a request, she was inspired by the god while in a state of ecstasy, and pronounced her prophecy. The response was rephrased by the priest, usually in verse form, and delivered to the supplicant. Delphi was considered a sacred place by all the Greeks.

Hydria

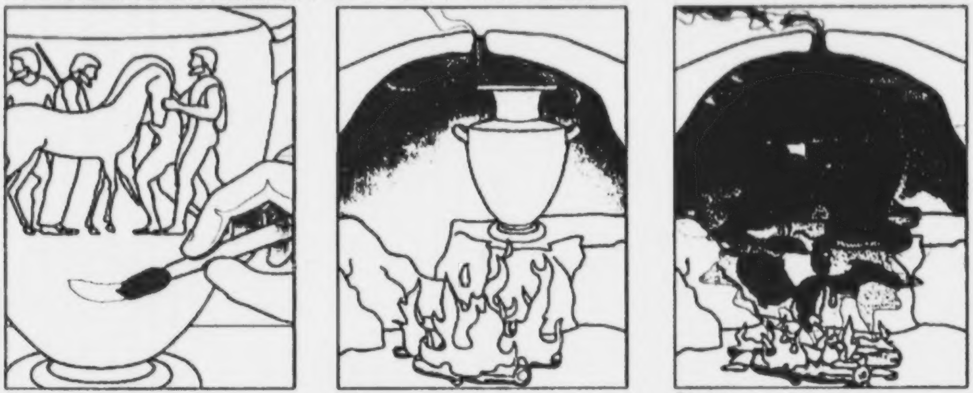
This vase, called a *hydria*, was used for carrying and pouring water. The two handles on the sides were used for carrying, and the third one, on the back, was used for pouring.

Detail of incised lines from the *Hydria*

Style

The painting style of this vase is called black-figure because the figures are rendered in black against the natural red color of the clay. The artist drew the figures on the surface of the vase with a clay and water solution called ENGOBE (ON-gobe), which turned black during the firing process.[2] White and dark red accents were added with separate solutions. The artist INCISED details into the engobe before firing. For example, the lines that show details in faces and clothing in this vase painting are all incised.

THE BLACK-FIGURE POTTERY PROCESS



STEP 1:
A clay solution called ***engobe*** is applied to the vessel where the artist wants it to turn ***black***. In this case, the horse and figures.

Various oxides, carbonates, and stains can be used to color the basic engobe solution. In the case, red engobe stain has been applied to color the figures' hair and beards, and the horse's mane.

STEP 2:
The vessel is fired in a kiln with a oxygen-rich atmosphere created with dry wood. The entire vessel turns ***red***.

STEP 3:
Sawdust, manure, or moist wood is added to fill the kiln with smoke. As a result, the kiln's oxygen level and temperature are reduced, and the vessel turns ***black***.

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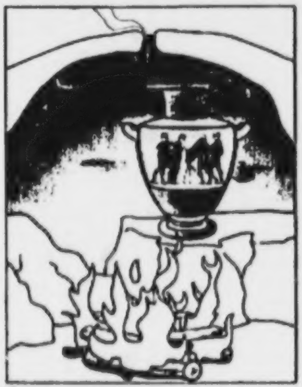
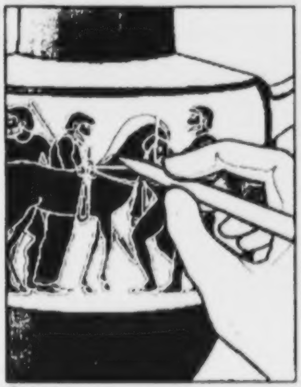
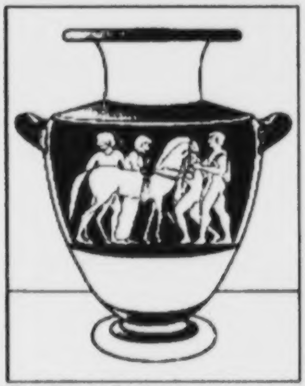


STEP 4:
As the smoke gradually clears, the kiln is re-oxygenated and the temperature rises. The unpainted parts of the vessel absorb oxygen and once again turn red, but areas painted with engobe do not absorb oxygen and stay black.

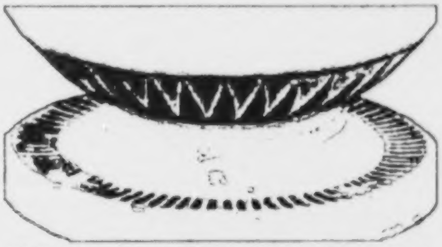


STEP 5:
After the vessel has cooled, the artist may create details or emphasize shapes by scratching through the black engobe.



RED-FIGURE PROCESS
To create a ***red-figure process*** vessel the artist paints engobe onto the background of the design. The background turns black during firing, leaving the figures on the vessel red.

This *hydria* exemplifies the qualities of harmony and symmetry, highly prized by the Greeks. The orderly designs conform to the different parts of the vase and accentuate its well-balanced, harmonious proportions. A circle of tongue MOTIFS (moe-TEEFS) decorate the base of the vase and emphasize its function as the support of the whole vessel. A circle of rays rises out of the base and draws the viewer's attention to the paintings on the main body.

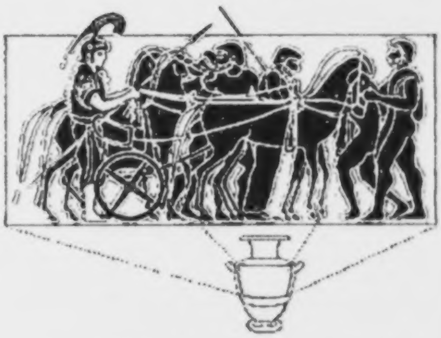


Detail showing the qualities of harmony and symmetry from the *Hydria*

Scenes

The main scene on the body of the *hydria* shows Athena in her chariot, presumably having just arrived from Mount Olympus to take Herakles to live with the gods. Because the Greeks thought of gods as humans, it is almost impossible to tell the difference between the two in this scene. However, Greeks familiar with their stories could readily identify the most popular figures by their ATTRIBUTES.

Athena wears armor, which identifies her as the warrior goddess and the protector of heros. She fought not for the sake of destruction but for just causes. The cloak she wears is made of serpents, a reference to the serpent-haired head of Medusa (meh-DOO-sa) given to her by Perseus (PURR-see-us) after she helped him to kill the evil gorgon. Her skin is white because vase painters typically colored all women's skin white and men's skin black.



Line Art Illustration of the *Hydria*
Full page printable version

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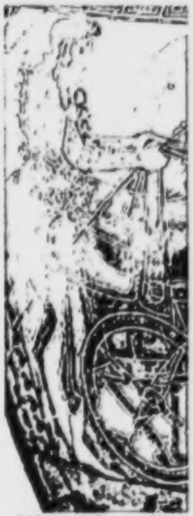
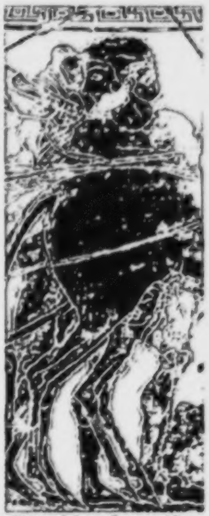
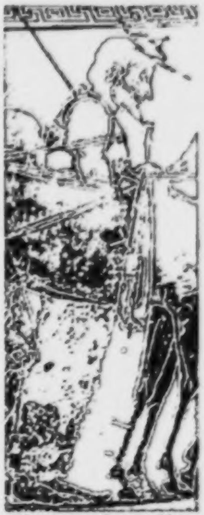
Herakles is shown in profile facing Athena in the middle of the scene and is easily identifiable because he has the short spiky hair of an athlete and a short beard. The figure to the left of Herakles is Hermes (HER-meez), the messenger god, who guided Herakles on his many journeys. Hermes is identified by his pointed traveling hat and his long red beard. He is also carrying a traveling staff in his left hand. The other figures are grooms who assist Athena in harnessing the four horses to the chariot she and Herakles will soon be riding to Mount Olympus. Athena taught the mortal king of Athens, Erichtonius (Ay-rick-toh-nee-us) how to harness the first war chariots. In fact, the harnessing of the chariot horses on this vase accurately reflects the equipment and methods used in 6th century Greece.



Athena from the *Hydria*



Herakles from the *Hydria*



Hermes from the *Hydria*

A band of lions and wild boars surrounds the bottom of the vase. They represent the Nemean lion and the wild boar of Erymanthus that Herakles had conquered as 2 of his 12 labors.[3]

[1] The foundation of the Olympic games was attributed to Herakles in his role of athlete-hero. The Greek lyric poet Pindar (518-438 B.C.), who wrote a set of poems about the games, says that Herakles arranged all the rules and details. [*New Larrousse Enclycopedia*, 169] The first official Olympic games were held in 776 BC, about 130-150 years before this vase was made.

[2] The process by which the figures become black is called an oxidation and reduction firing. During the first stage of firing, when oxygen is let into the kiln, the body of the vase turns red. During the second stage the oxygen supply is cut off, causing the whole vase to turn black. During the last stage the oxygen is let back into the kiln and the clay, but not the engobe, returns to its original red color.

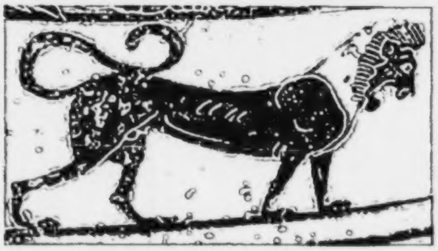
[3] See Story section of *Door Knocker in the Form of Medusa*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

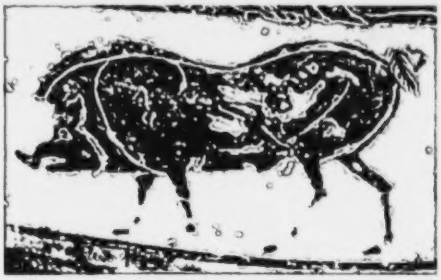
Look

1. Review the story of Herakles.
   What part of Herakles' life is illustrated here? Athena coming with her chariot to take Herakles to live with the gods.

What animals do you see on the lower section of the *hydria*, beneath the figures of Herakles and Athena? Lion and boar.



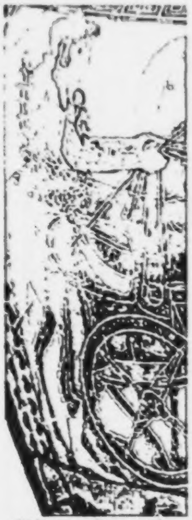
Detail from the *Hydria*



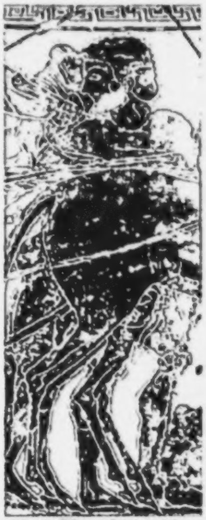
Detail from the *Hydria*

Why might these animals appear on this *hydria*? They represent 2 of his 12 labors.

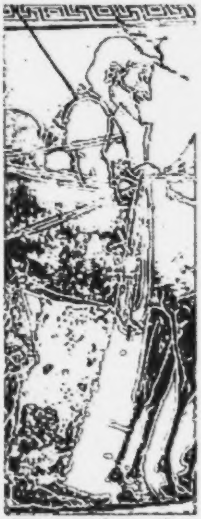
2. An ATTRIBUTE ? is a distinctive symbolic feature that identifies a character. Athena's attributes include armor, a cloak made of serpents, and a chariot. Identify these attributes on the figure of Athena. Herakles' attributes include the short spiky hair of an athlete and a short beard. Identify these attributes on the figure of Herakles. Identify the attributes of Hermes: a pointed traveling hat, long red beard, and traveling staff.



Athena from the *Hydria*



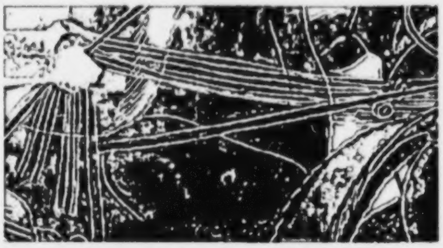
Herakles from the *Hydria*



Hermes from the *Hydria*

3. Which colors do you see? Orange, black, white, and dark red. The orange comes from the color of the clay, while the black, white, and dark red were added to the surface before firing. Where has the artist used a sharp tool to scrape through the layers of added color to reveal the orange clay beneath? The figures on the main body of the *hydria*.

4. What details was he able to include with these lines? Faces of humans and horses. Muscles of men and to a lesser extent horses. Athena's costume, chariot, harness, and reins.



Detail of reins from the Hydria

5. **The people of ancient Greece valued harmonious proportion, order, and balance in their art.**
How has the Antimenes painter achieved order, harmony, and balance in the color and shape of this *hydria*? The shape of the *hydria* is SYMMETRICAL ?: equal on both sides of an imaginary vertical line through the center. There are also equal amounts of black and orange on the *hydria*; neither of these colors overpowers the other.

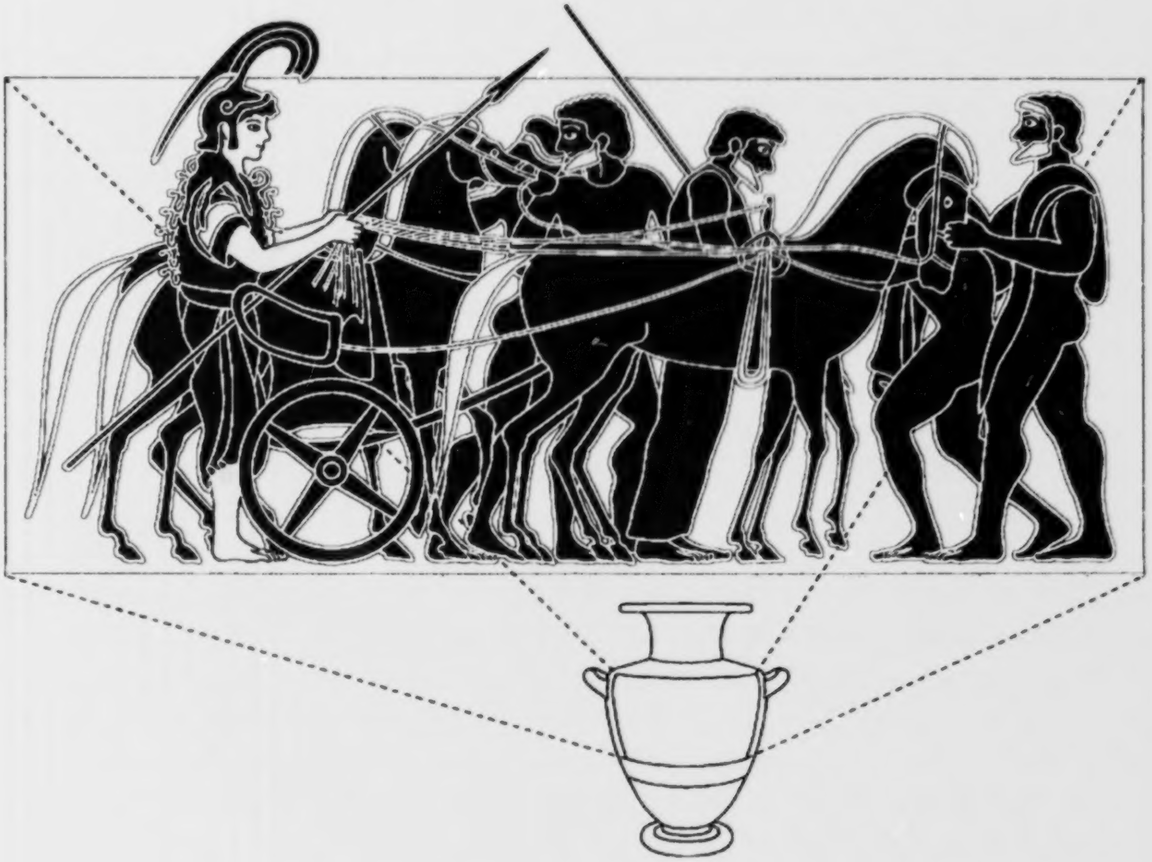
Think

1. **Review the story of Herakles. The people of ancient Greece valued order, balance, and perfect proportion, not only in their art but also in their daily lives.**
How did the character of Herakles personify order, balance, and proportion? Herakles possessed a balance of mortal and super god-like qualities. The proper proportions of physical strength, courage, and hard work made him an ideal character.

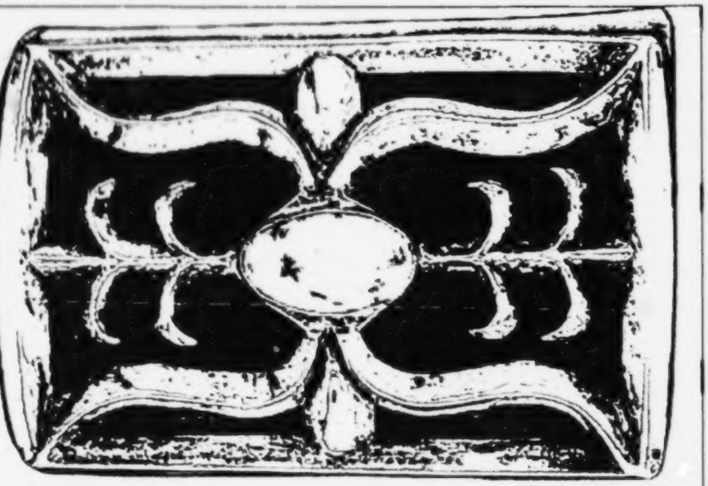
2. **Herakles was a hero to the ancient Greeks because he embodied both mortal and superhuman qualities.**
Can you think of any modern-day heroes that embody both mortal and superhuman qualities? Superman, Wonder Woman, Power Rangers, X-Men, Spiderman, Xena Warrior Princess, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Batman.

3. **The figures on the *hydria* look human, but they were gods to the Greek people who lived at the time. Explore the other works of art in the World Mythology image set.**
Do any of them represent mythological figures as human? Orpheus and Eurydice, Saint Catherine of Alexandria, Shoki the Demon Queller, Theseus.
Have you seen works of art that represent mythological figures as animals? the antelope Chi Wara, Raven.
Are there works of art that represent mythological figures as some combination of the two? Thoth, Nebuchadnezzar, Medusa, the Centaur in Theseus Slaying a Centaur.

Back to Text



Ketoh (Wrist Guard)



KETOH (WRIST GUARD)
About 1930
Cast silver with turquoise on a leather band
Bequest of Virginia Doneghy

KEY IDEAS

- Navajo Indian archers wore wrist guards called ketohs (GAY-toe) to protect their forearms from the snap of their bowstrings. Navajo silversmiths adapted the ketoh form into decorative jewelry.
- The Navajo creation story describes the adventure of the earliest beings as they moved through four distinct worlds.
- The design on this *ketoh* emphasizes the Navajo values of order, harmony, and simplicity. It also evokes the topography of the Navajo creation story.

STORY

Before this world existed, and far below it, the First World lay in darkness. Here lived six beings: First Man, First Woman, Salt Woman, Fire God, Coyote, and Begochiddy, the golden-haired child of the Sun. Begochiddy made four mountains in this first world - white to the east; blue to the south; yellow to the west; and black to the north. Then Begochiddy made insects and plants. But conflicts arose and the first beings, tired of the First World and its darkness, decided to leave.

At the center of the First World, Begochiddy made a red mountain and planted a giant reed. The first beings gathered all of Begochiddy's creations and crawled inside the hollow reed. The reed grew and grew and carried them into the Second World. In the Second World, which was blue, Begochiddy created still more new things. When the Cat People, who lived in the Second World, fought the newcomers, First Man used magic to overcome them. Conflicts again disrupted the harmony of this world and the first beings collected their possessions and travelled in the giant reed up to the Third World.

The Third World was beautiful, yellow and filled with light. There, Begochiddy created rivers and springs, animals and birds, trees and lightning, and many kinds of human beings. When the men and women began to quarrel, Begochiddy separated them. But they were so unhappy that Begochiddy reunited them, warning that the Third World would be flooded if there was any more trouble.

And then Coyote caused trouble. Walking by the river, he spied in the water a baby with long black hair. He lifted the baby from the river and hid it under his blanket, telling no one. Colorful storms and torrential rains approached from all directions. Everyone fled to the protective hollow of the giant reed, which carried them upward. But the reed stopped growing before it reached the next world. So Locust helped Begochiddy make a hole that led to the Fourth World, an island surrounded by water.

Seeing the waters still rising in the Third World, Begochiddy asked who had angered the Water Monster. Coyote tightened his blanket about his body and Begochiddy ordered him to open it. There was the water baby. Coyote returned the baby to the Third World and the waters receded. In the Fourth World, Begochiddy set out the mountains and placed the moon, sun, and stars in the sky. Begochiddy taught everyone the right way to live, including how to care for plants such as corn, squash, and beans, and how to give thanks.[1]

[1] The version recounted here is based on the version told in Joseph Bruchac, *Native American Stories* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1991), pp. 10-18.

BACKGROUND

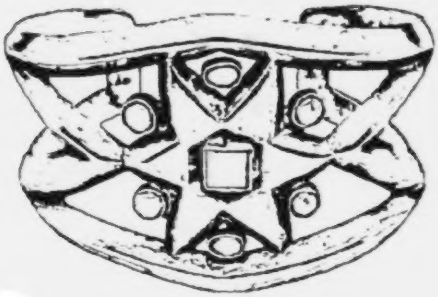
The Navajo

The Navajo call themselves Diné (DEE-nay), meaning "the people." They migrated from northwestern Canada sometime around 1400 to what is now the southwest region of the United States. The early Navajo were nomadic hunters. They learned farming and weaving from the native Pueblo peoples, with whom they also developed trade networks.

Since the 16th century, various peoples, including the Spanish, Mexicans, and Euro-Americans, tried to control the Navajo. But their sophisticated native culture remained strong. The United States Army began an aggressive campaign against the Navajo in 1863, destroying their livestock and crops. Many Navajo were then forced onto government reservations.

Silver

While on the reservation, many Navajo artists created silver jewelry and textiles for trade. When white traders opened trading posts on the reservations, a barter system developed, enabling the Navajo to exchange their handmade products for tools, canned foods, and other manufactured products. Silver jewelry was a particularly valuable trade item, especially by the turn of the century, when railroad expansion brought a flourishing tourist market to the Southwest. Commercial jewelry businesses coerced Navajo artists to mass-produce nontraditional objects such as boxes, letter openers, and ashtrays.[1] However, silversmiths who lived outside of large trade centers continued to produce more traditional art forms, including bracelets, buckles, and ketohs.



Bracelet
before 1925
Silver, turquoise
Bequest of Virginia Doneghy

Ketohs

Ketohs were originally leather straps worn by Navajo archers to protect their forearms from the snap of the bowstring when shooting an arrow. By the 1870s, silver was commonly attached to the leather to give the wearer more protection. The designs of the silver ketohs gradually became more intricate as they evolved into the purely decorative form of jewelry they are today. In the reservation barter system, a ketoh could be traded for several sheep.[2]

Ketoh

This *ketoh* features an open-worked rectangle of silver attached to a dark brown leather strap. An oval of INLAID (?) turquoise marks the center of the piece. Broad curves of silver, like pairs of leaves around a central bud, extend to the four corners of the design. Single corn stalks emerge from the top and bottom of the turquoise.

Ketoh designs often have an emphatic center like this one, recalling the sacred place from which the first Navajo emerged from the giant reed into this world. The symmetrical four-part organization seen here is also commonly used to evoke the four cardinal directions. In the Navajo creation story, Begochiddy brought order out of chaos in the first and fourth (final) worlds by dividing them into four quadrants, marking each with a mountain. Order and harmony are further evoked in the *ketoh* through the careful balance of curved lines, symbolizing the female ideal of activity, and straight lines, symbolizing the male ideal of stasis.

Hózhó

The Navajo ideals of order, balance, and harmony are encompassed in the concept of Hózhó, which roughly means "beauty." To the Navajo, a person is beautiful if his or her life is in balance. Hózhó guides all aspects of traditional Navajo life, from agriculture to architecture to medicine. Hózhó is represented in art through balanced, symmetrical, centralized designs like that of this *ketoh*.

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[1] LaRayne Parrish, "The Stylistic Development of Navajo Jewelry," in *Southwest Indian Silver from the Doneghy Collection*, ed. Louise Lincoln (Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1982), p. 34.

[2] John Adair, "The Cultural and Economic Context of Navajo Jewelry," in *Southwest Indian Silver from the Doneghy Collection*, p. 25.

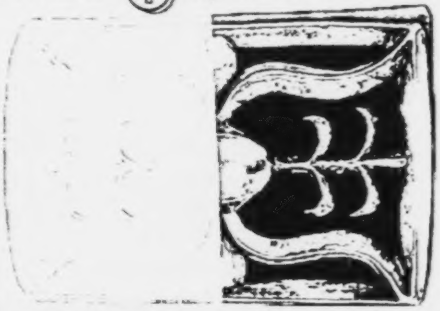
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. Where do you see straight lines in this *ketoh*? Two straight lines extend vertically from the center, four straight lines make up the edges of the rectangular *ketoh*.
   Where do you see curved lines? Four curved lines radiate from the center to each of the four corners, two small curved lines branch off from each of the straight lines extending from the center.

2. In the story, When the six beings rose into each of the four worlds, they always emerged at the center.
   How has the artist marked the center of this ketoh? With an INLAID (?) turquoise oval.
   Begochiddy brought order out of chaos in the Fourth World by dividing it into four quadrants, marking each with a mountain.
   How has the artist who made this ketoh divided it into four parts? Four curved lines radiate from the center to the edges.

3. SYMMETRICAL (?) balance is an exact balanced arrangement of forms on both sides of an imaginary line through the center of an object. ASYMMETRICAL (?)



The line of symmetry from the *Ketoh* Wrist Guard

balance is an arrangement of forms that do not appear the same on both sides of the imaginary center line.
Is this *ketoh* symmetrical or asymmetrical? Symmetrical.

Think

1. Discuss the history of the Navajo people. Ketohs were originally worn by Navajo archers to protect their forearms from the snap of the bowstring. The designs of the ketohs became more intricate as they evolved into the purely decorative form of jewelry they are today.
   What do you think caused this evolution? When Navajo were forced onto government reservations, their traditional way of life changed. They no longer practiced archery because they could no longer hunt freely, but many of their traditional art forms were valued as trade items.

2. The artist who made the *ketoh* balanced it SYMMETRICALLY. (?) It is an exact balanced arrangement of forms on both sides of an imaginary line through its center. Look around your classroom.
   What other examples of symmetry do you see? Faces, our bodies, the number 8, desks, chairs, etc.

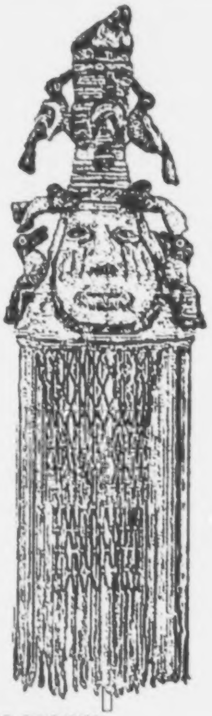
3. The Navajo ideals of order, balance, and harmony are encompassed in the concept of hózhó, which roughly means "beauty." Hózhó is represented in art through balanced, SYMMETRICAL, (?) centralized designs like that of this *ketoh*. How do we experience the presence or absence of order, balance, and harmony in our lives? How do you feel when you don't get enough sleep? How do you feel when you don't get enough to eat? When you eat too much?

4. In Navajo art, curved lines SYMBOLIZE (?) the female ideal of activity, and straight lines symbolize the male ideal of stasis. The artist who made this *ketoh* carefully balanced curved and straight lines in the design.
   Why might it be important for male and female to be balanced entities? The balance of male and female ensures reproduction in plant, animal, and human life as well as harmony and happiness.

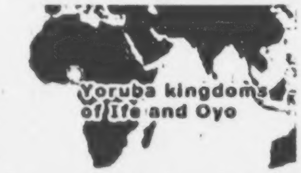
King's Crown

KEY IDEAS

- According to Yoruba (YOUR-a-bah) mythology, the first Yoruba kings were the offspring of the creator, Oduduwa (oh-doo-DOO-wah).
- A Yoruba *king's crown* identifies the status of its wearer and gives the king the power to interact with the spirit world in order to benefit his people.
- A veil, a large face, and a group of birds are SYMBOLS that commonly appear on a Yoruba *king's crown*.



KING'S CROWN
King's Crown
19th century
Beads, leather, canvas, and wicker
The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund



STORY

Long, long ago, Olorun (OH-low-run), the sky god, lowered a great chain from the heavens to the ancient waters. Down this chain climbed Oduduwa, Olorun's son. Oduduwa brought with him a handful of dirt, a special five-toed chicken, and a palm nut. He threw the dirt upon the ancient waters and set the chicken on the dirt. The chicken busily scratched and scattered the dirt until it formed the first dry earth. In the center of this new world, Oduduwa created the magnificent Ife (EE-fay) kingdom. He planted the palm nut, which grew into a proud tree with 16 branches, symbolizing the 16 sons andgrandsons of Oduduwa.[1]

Oduduwa was the first ruler of the kingdom and the father of all Yoruba. Over time he crowned his 16 sons and grandsons and sent them off to establish their own great Yoruba kingdoms. As descendants of the sky god, these first Yoruba rulers and their direct descendants were divine kings. Only they could wear special veiled crowns that symbolized their sacred power.[2]

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[1] P. C. Lloyd, "Sacred Kingship and Government among the Yoruba," *Africa* 30, no. 3: pp. 222-223.

[2] Variations on this creation story exist among the many Yoruba kingdoms. Each variation legitimizes the lineage and right to rule of the individual kingdom's own ruler.

BACKGROUND

The Yoruba

The Yoruba peoples of West Africa have lived in the southwestern area of what are now Nigeria and the Republic of Benin (BE-neen) since the 11th century. The earliest Yoruba kingdoms of Ife and Oyo (oh-YO) spread over vast territories. Divine kings, descendants of Oduduwa, ruled these kingdoms, advised by councils of elders and chiefs. As part of their royal REGALIA, kings wore distinctive beaded veiled crowns.

Crowns

The beaded veiled crown, called adenla ("great crown"), is more than a symbol of kingship. Each crown embodies ideals of political and personal stability, refuge for the oppressed, salvation, and much more. Worn only on ceremonial occasions, the crown gave the king the power to communicate with his spirit ancestors in order to benefit his people. At other times it was kept on display and given the same respect and attention as the king himself. Because these crowns hold so much power, they are among the most sacred Yoruba objects.

Beginning in the 1830s, civil wars disrupted the Yoruba kingdoms. From the 1890s until the 1960s, British and French interference further challenged traditional Yoruba ways. In this climate of political upheaval, Yoruba leaders without official claims to kingship began to commission and wear veiled crowns. Although the sacred powers of Yoruba kings are limited today, disputes still rage over the rights to wear veiled crowns.

King's Crown

This 19th-century *king's crown* is made of thousands of tiny brightly colored glass beads. Many features of this crown are characteristic of nearly all sacred Yoruba crowns.

Projection

A tall striped projection, perhaps representing a hairstyle, stands above the face. Among some Yoruba, projections from the heads of special individuals signify spiritual power. The projection on this crown once contained a pouch of herbal medicines that gave the crown its power. For fear he would be blinded, even the king could not look inside his own crown.

Birds

Sixteen colorful beaded birds surround the king's crown. These birds signify a divine force called áshe (ah-SHE)—the power to make things happen—which only the highest Yoruba men and women possess. The birds connote the áshe of the king and of a group of elderly women called "the mothers" who support him.[1] The mothers' special power enables them to turn into night birds who punish or destroy those who are arrogant, selfish, or otherwise immoral. On the crown, the birds symbolize the king's power and the mothers' power to protect him and the people.

Face

A great yellow face dominates the crown. Its black-and-white almond-shaped eyes, yellow nose, and oval blue mouth are raised from the surface. The three vertical lines on either side of the nose are scars denoting the king's lineage. The face represents a royal ancestor of the king, probably Oduduwa, and unites the spirit world of the ancestors with the earthly world of the king and his people.

Veil

The most distinctive feature of this crown is the veil of beads that once cascaded over the king's face. A net of black, white, maroon, and blue beads is surrounded by multicolored strands of beads. The veil obscured the king's features to protect men and women from looking directly at his face when he was united with his powerful ancestors.

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[1] Robert Farris Thompson, "Ashé: The-Power-to-Make-Things-Happen," *Parabola: Magazine of Myth and Tradition*, 17, no. 4 (1992): pp. 86-89.

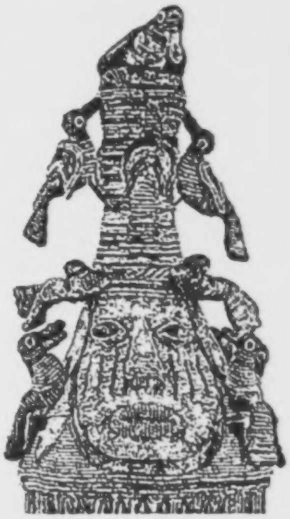
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. **Review the story of Oduduwa.**
   What aspects of the story do you see on the crown? The face may represent a king's ancestor or Oduduwa himself.
   Does knowing the story of Oduduwa help you to understand what you see on the crown? What questions do you have about the crown's appearance that weren't answered by the story?

2. What is this crown made of? Glass beads.
   Make a shopping list of all the bead colors you would need to make this crown. Look carefully at the TEXTURE (?) **of the *King's crown*. If you could touch it, how would it feel? Smooth? Rough? Soft? Bumpy?**

3. **The beads that were applied to the surface of the crown are of uniform shape, size, and** TEXTURE, (?) **yet the artist used the beads to define different objects and features on the crown.**
   Where has the artist varied the direction of the rows of beads to define objects or features? The black outline around the yellow face, lips, and eyes; birds' eyes are circular against vertical rows of beads on the bird heads; connecting rows of beads on the fringe to form a diagonal pattern where the veil would cover the king's face.
   Where has the artist used color to define objects and features on the crown? Lips and eyes. Entire face is a different color from the background. Birds are defined by red beaks and white and black eyes. Bands of yellow beads outline some of the wings.
   Some beaded parts of the crown are raised slightly to help define features.
   Where are they? Eyes, nose, and lips on the face.



Detail of *King's Crown*

Think

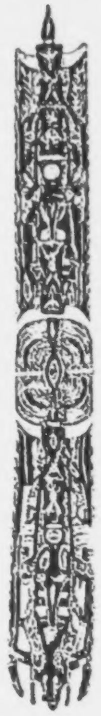
1. **The Yoruba *king's crown* identifies the wearer as a king and gives him special powers to interact with the spirit world for the benefit of his people.**
   Can you think of special headgear that people wear today that identify their role or status in the community? Some examples: police hats, fire fighters' helmets, graduation caps, military hats, bridal veils, chef's hats, bishop's miters, yarmulkes, any other religious head wear.

2. **Bring in pictures of some other examples of courtly attire from a variety of cultures.**
   Why do you think rulers or important people in various cultures wear this kind of REGALIA? (?)
   So that people can identify them, to follow tradition, to appear wealthy and powerful, to link them with rulers of the past.
   Do rulers or important people dress this way every day? On what occasions do they wear their full regalia? When you dress up for special occasions, what does your outfit tell people about you?

3. **The birds on the crown represent a group of wise elder women. They are** SYMBOLS (?) **of the king's ability to deal with the forces of evil.**
   Why might the birds be placed on the ***king's crown*** as opposed to other parts of the king's REGALIA? (?) A Yoruba king uses the wisdom of these elder women to benefit his people. The symbols of the elders appear to surround the king's head, an advantageous location for imparting wisdom. Birds on the *king's crown* are easy for his subjects to see. The *king's crown* is the most sacred and powerful of all royal Yoruba objects and so is an honored location reserved for symbols of the other powerful members of the community.

4. **Some people think objects like this *king's crown* should be kept in museums for everyone to learn from and enjoy, even though they were never intended to be displayed that way. Others think that objects like these are treasures of the cultures they came from and should be returned.** What do you think? **Explain your answer.** No right answer.

Malagan Pole



MALAGAN POLE
19th century
Polychrome wood
Gift of the Morse Foundation

Papua,
New Guinea

KEY IDEAS

- The story of an old woman named Tsenabonpil (sane-ah-BONE-pill) and a monstrous pig explains the traditional social organization of the people of New Ireland.

- The importance of the natural world to the people of New Ireland is evident in their traditional malagan (MAH-la-gan) festival, mythology, and art.

- The composition, colors, and subject of this pole are all characteristics of northern New Ireland funerary sculptures called malagan.

STORY

The people of Lesu (LES-sue) fled their New Ireland homes to a nearby island to escape a frightening monstrous pig named Luana (loo-AH-na).[1] Luana ate people. The people left behind the old woman Tsenabonpil (sen-ah-BON-pill), fearing that her severely swollen leg would sink their boat.[2]

Tsenabonbil gave birth to twin boys, Daror (DAH-roar) and Damuramurari (dah-moo-rah-moo-RAH-ree). When they were older, Tsenabonpil told the boys they must kill the evil pig, Luana. After many adventures they managed to capture and kill the pig. Tsenabonpil then attached some of the pig's hair to a coconut and floated it out to the exiled Lesu people to let them know that Luana was dead.

When the Lesu people returned in their canoes, Tsenabonpil assigned them their social structure. She designated the two marriage classes - the Eagle and the Hawk - and gave names to the many clans. She gave the Lesu knowledge of magic, medicine, and crafts. When Tsenabonpil was done, she and her sons disappeared forever.

[1] This is an adaptation of the story as related in Hortense Powdermaker, *Life in Lesu: The Study of a Melanesian Society in New Ireland* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971; New York: Norton, 1933).
[2] The old woman Tsenabonpil is considered the source of all knowledge in parts of northern New Ireland. Her story, which explains the traditional social organization of the people of New Ireland, is told with many variations. According to Powdermaker, *Life in Lesu*, p. 35 she probably suffered from elephantiasis.

BACKGROUND

New Ireland

New Ireland is a long, thin island in the Pacific Ocean, located north of Australia and just south of the equator.[1] New Ireland is a province of Papua New Guinea (pop-poo-ah noo GI-nee) and the second largest island in northwest Melanesia. It forms part of the Bismarck Archipelago. Tropical rainforests cover much of the island, and a wide variety of birds, reptiles, and sea animals live there. Mammals are scarce, except for marsupials, pigs, and dogs. The importance of the natural world to the people of New Ireland is evident in their traditional social structure, mythology, festivals, and art.

Malagan

One of the central events in the social, economic, and aesthetic life of New Ireland communities is the malagan, a festival held in honor of deceased clan members. The elaborate funeral rites and festivities commemorate ancestors as well as help the souls of the dead depart the world of the living and acclimate to the world of the dead. The malagan festival, which may be held several months, or even years, after a person's death, brings together large social groups and provides an opportunity for the people to express solidarity.

Elaborately carved sculptures are important aspects of the malagan festival. On the northern coast of New Ireland a clan member commissions a carver to make special sculptures to be revealed during festival performances.[2] Depending on the number ordered, a single commission may take several months to complete. The ritual process of producing malagan sculptures is complex and time-consuming; it is as much a part of the festivities as the performance itself. After the sculptures are carved and the wood has dried, they are placed in an enclosure built in or near the cemetery. Sea-snail shells are placed into the eye sockets of the figures. Only then can the sculptures be painted.

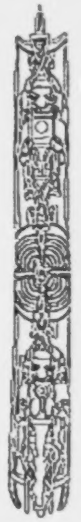
The dramatic unveiling of the malagan figures at the end of the festivities is accompanied by generous feasts and dances at which the spirits of the dead are believed to be present. The sculptures serve little or no practical function after a festival has ended and they are often left to rot.

Malagan Pole

Standing more than eight feet tall, this *malagan pole* is made up of many intricately intertwined animals and humans. At the top, a man crouches on a frigate bird, and at the bottom, a woman stands on the head of a wild pig. In the middle of the pole is a complex GEOMETRIC design, called a mataling (MAH-ta-ling), or "eye of fire." At its center is an eye INLAID with snail shell. A pair of dark, elegantly decorated frigate birds face the "eye of fire." The lengthy tail feathers of the upper bird are held by the man and blend into the feathers of another bird at the very top of the pole. The lower bird's tail, held by the woman, hangs in front of the pig at the bottom of the pole.

White, orange-red, and black pigments are the main colors of this pole, and traces of a bright yellow pigment are visible around the central design. When this pole was made, most pigments were still made from natural materials: white from lime powder, red from red ocher, black from charcoal ashes or burned nuts, and yellow from vegetable matter.

The designs on the wild pig's head show the northern New Ireland painters' preference for breaking down large surface areas into small, decorative, patterned parts. The boar's ears, eyelids, and long snout are all striped. Around its large white tusks are many small teeth, indicated by orange-red lines. When metal tools were introduced, carvers were no longer confined to static flat styles. They created dynamic, open fretwork styles whose amazing complexity appealed to early 20th century European artists.



Line Art Illustration of the *Malagan Pole*
Full page printable version

Meaning

The human figures on the malagan probably refer to ancestors, and the birds to air; together they allude to the interrelatedness of all things. Because each malagan commemorates a specific individual in a particular ceremony, its meaning is known only to those present at that ceremony. The same image may mean something different to everybody. For example, to one person the pig at the bottom might stand for the community's source of food and to another it might recall the mythic story of the monstrous pig Luana.

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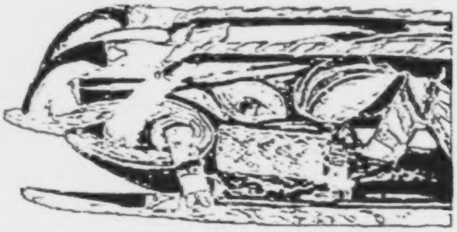
[1] Contact with Europeans began in the early 1600s when Dutch merchant shops began sailing into the channel between New Ireland and New Britain to take on fresh water. In 1767 Phillip Carteret landed there and took possession of the island for Britain, naming it New Hibernia (New Ireland).

[2] A carving is commissioned by the owner of a copyright of a design. The owner may sell or give a copyright to another, but then can no longer use it. It is the ownership and transfer of these copyrights that gives significance to the carved objects.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

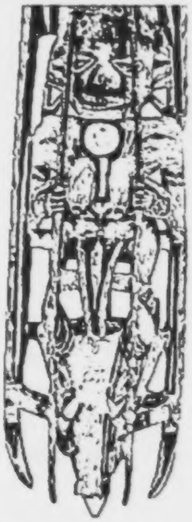
Look

1. **Tell the story of Tsenabonpil. The story of Tsenabonpil came from the people of New Ireland, the same people who made this *malagan pole*.**
   Find a wild pig on the *malagan pole*. Head of a pig on the bottom of the pole.
   Find a woman. Crouching on top of the pig.
   Find three birds on the pole. Pair of birds on either side of the center and one at the top.
   Find a man. Between the two birds on the top half of the pole.
   There is a GEOMETRIC (?) **design on the pole that New Ireland people call a mataling, or "eye of fire."**
   Where is it? Exact center.
   What is at its center? A sea snail shell.



Detail showing pig's head from the *Malagan Pole* (image is rotated 90°)

2. **The New Ireland artists who carved and painted this pole divided large surface areas into decoratively** PATTERNED (?) **parts.**
   Where do you see patterned parts on the pig's head? Separate color and pattern around the eye, mouth, teeth, ear; crescent shape between the eye and mouth; red-and-white stripe along the top of the head; rectangle below eye and ear.



Detail showing the negative shapes around the female figure from the *Malagan Pole*

3. POSITIVE SHAPES (?) **occupy space, just like you do. The spaces around positive shapes are called** NEGATIVE SHAPES. (?)
   Where are the negative shapes in this part of the *malagan pole*? Negative shapes exist all around the female figure on the bottom of the pole, as well as in front of the figure created by the extended bird tail. Accept a variety of answers as all of these areas may be difficult to see in any one detail

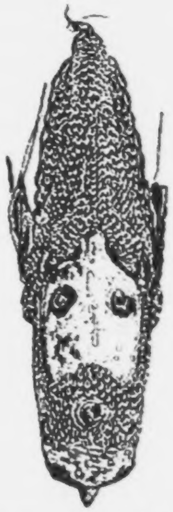
image.
Do the negative shapes make this sculpture appear sturdy or delicate? Many small negative shapes create a feeling of lightness and delicacy.
What else has the artist done to make this huge sculpture look delicate? Small geometric designs painted all over the sculpture contribute to its delicate appearance.

Think

1. **Malagan festivals, like the one for which this *malagan pole* was made, are ways for New Ireland communities to commemorate someone who has died. Funeral rites and festivities help souls depart the world of the living and get used to the world of the dead. How do we honor and commemorate our ancestors? What kinds of ceremonies do we have when people in our communities die?**

2. **Malagan sculptures may take months to carve. The malagan festival culminates in the unveiling of malagan sculptures. After the festival is over, the sculptures are often left to rot.**
   Why do you think the people of New Ireland leave the sculptures to rot after the malagan festival? Once the festival for which they were created is over, the sculptures are no longer of any use to the community.

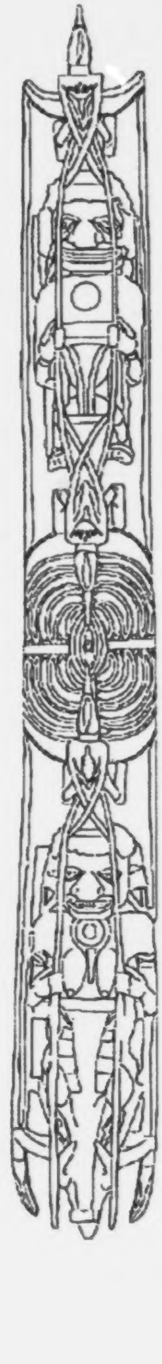
3. **New Ireland artists employ the technique of** ASSEMBLAGE.
   What does that word mean? A form of art involving the assembly and arrangement of unrelated objects, parts, and materials in a kind of sculptural collage.
   Could you have an assemblage of people? How is a malagan festival an assemblage? A malagan festival brings together large social groups and provides an opportunity to reestablish bonds between neighbors and friends.
   Can you think of an example of an assemblage of ideas? A science fair.



Another example of a New Guinea assemblage piece

Mel Mask
Iatmul
About 1920
Wood, fibers, metal, shells, hair
The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

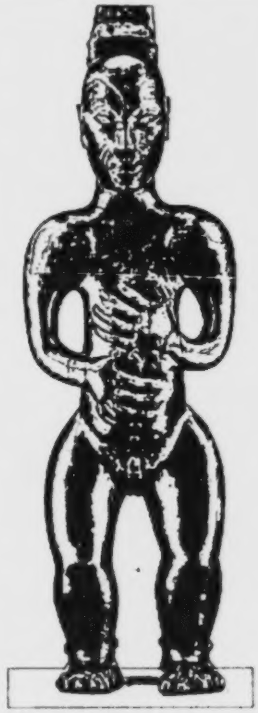
Back to Text



Maori Post Figure: Poutokomanawa

KEY IDEAS

- Honoring one's ancestors is a key principle of the native Maori religion.
- The post figure, representing an ancestor, is the symbolic central support of the community meeting house, and is greatly revered.
- Each body part of the figure has a specific spiritual meaning.



MAORI POST FIGURE: POUTOKOMANAWA
About 1840
Wood, paua shell
Gift of Curtis Galleries, Inc.

New Zealand

STORY

In the beginning there were only Rangini, the Sky Father, and Papatuanaka, the Earth Mother, bound together in a tight embrace.[1] Their many children, crushed between them, fought with their parents and with each other, trying to break free. Finally, Tan Mahuta, god of the forests, managed to push his parents apart, and at this moment, the world as the Maori understand it, was created. The freed children of Paptuanuku and Rangini became the inhabitants of the earth, sky and water. The earth was populated by their descendents in the form of humans, who traveled across the ocean to explore the many islands of Polynesia that comprised their known world.

Because all humans are descendents of the original divine pair, the Maori believe that it is important to maintain the spiritual power in themselves, and to remain in contact with the various deities of the forest, the weather, the ocean and agriculture. It is also essential to revere and communicate with one's ancestors, who remain present in the community as spiritual protectors of the living. Knowledge of one's ancestry, or *whakapapa*, is crucial, because lines of descent determine the Maori social order, as well as the institutions of leadership and aristocracy. A person reinforces his *whakapapa* by recitations of the layers of descent back to the original voyagers from Eastern Polynesia, and beyond to the gods and godesses themselves.

[1] The Maori creation story, as well as a comprehensive survey of Maori culture, is given in *Maori Art and Culture*, ed. D.C. Starzecka, (Chicago, Illinois: Art Media Resources Ltd., 1991)

BACKGROUND

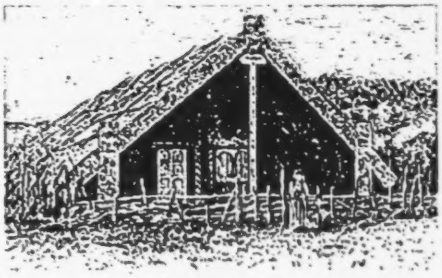
The ancestors of the Maori immigrated to New Zealand over 1000 years ago, when Polynesian sailors sailed southward from the Island of Hawaii.[1] The Maori are divided into about 50 tribes who trace their descent to individuals who arrived in the first canoes (called the "founding canoes"). Over the generations these tribes developed into complex social groups known as *waka*, which in many instances were named for the founding canoes. Tribal affiliation is more important than a sense of national identity. In fact, Maori is not an ancient name, but came about as a result of their encounters with voyagers from the northern hemisphere from the 18th century onwards. The word *Maori* means clear, fresh or natural; it also means usual or ordinary. The original inhabitants described themselves as ordinary (maori), as belonging to a collective group clearly different from the new (and extraordinary) arrivals.

The Maori's first sustained contact with Europeans happened on October 6, 1792 when the British Captain Cook and his crew landed in Poverty Bay in New Zealand. As a result of this visit, the British decided to colonize New Zealand. The Maori resisted these colonization efforts, and warfare with the British continued until 1865 when the British, having superior weapons, finally overcame them. Similar to the course of events in North America, within a few decades the native people were forced to give up most of their land, and to see their culture and language undermined by European influences. They also fell victims to the European diseases brought by the new settlers, with the result that the Maori population decreased dramatically during the 19th century. Both Catholic and Protestant missionaries were active in New Zealand early on, so that by 1840 almost all the Maori had become Christians.

In recent decades there has been a concerted effort on the part of both the government and the Maori people to revive their language, traditions and art forms, and they now have representation in parliament. The native Maori population is also increasing.

The Meeting House

The most important building in any community was, and still is, the meeting house, the community's most powerful statement of identity. The primary purpose of traditional Maori art is to make this house beautiful. The meeting house itself symbolically represents a particular ancestor, whose spirit is enclosed by the building. The ridge-pole is likened to the ancestor's backbone, and the rafters to the ancestor's ribs. All ceremonies and decisions concerning the community take place here.



Maori meeting house

Origins

This stately figure was the principal carving in a meeting house of the Hawkes Bay region on the eastern coast of New Zealand's North Island. (This building no longer exists and was probably destroyed by fire.) Its Maori name is *poutokamanawa*, a term given to the post incorporating an ancestral figure that supports the main ridge-beam of a carved house. *Poutokamanawa* have the sacred ceremonial duty of welcoming the community and receiving guests as they enter the building. Consequently, all who enter are enfolded by the ancestral spirit.

Another Maori figure which shows similar body characteristics

Tekoteko Figure
Maori
1775-1800
Wood, mother-of-pearl
The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

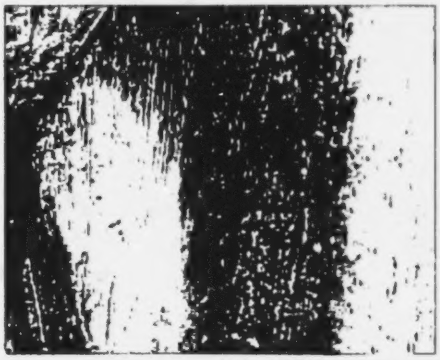
Another example of a meeting house carving.

House Panel
Maori
About 1880
Wood, shell
The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Body and Meaning
Like all sacred carvings, a *poutokamanawa* was made by highly skilled carver-priests, observing very specific rituals and ceremonial restrictions. *Poutokamanawa* are not completely naturalistic because they represent ancestral spirits, whose role is to comfort and watch over their living descendents.[2] The head is disproportionately large because the Maori consider the head to be the center of personal power. The large hands spread over the abdomen emphasize the center of the body, the navel, believed to be the center of life force. It is marked on this statue by a raised disc. The navel (*maori-ora*) was considered to be the link between the people still on earth and their ancestral spirits. Individualistic tattoo patterns incised on the face may replicate those of a specific ancestor. The hair is bound up in a topknot, characteristic of a warrior chief, and the stern eyes are inlaid with paua shell, which adds life and fire to the gaze of the statue. This figure escaped mutilation during the 19th century by zealous missionaries, who regarded such carvings as creations of the devil.

Surface gloss
A post figure is eagerly caressed and embraced by the Maori, who press their noses against its nose, showing deep respect and affection. It is given a protective coat of varnish that produces its high gloss finish, and is further polished by generations of affectionate touching.

Ownership
This *poutokomanawa* was carved in the 1840s, and was later



Close-up of surface patina from the *Maori Post Figure: Poutokomanawa*

given to Archbishop William Williams (1800-1878) about the time he retired to Hawkes Bay in the 1880s, as a tribute to the love and friendship he showed his parishioners.[3] It is one of the few post figures that remained privately owned until it was acquired by a museum (The Minneapolis Institute of Arts).

[1] Starzecka, *op.cit.*, 30.

[2] For a complete description of *poutokomanawa* and the relative Maori terminology, see the entry 162 in *Sotheby's Auction Catalogue, Important African and Oceanic Art*, New York, Nov. 22, 1999, pp. 25-28.

[3] His grandson, Dr. A. H. Williams, brought the *poutokomanawa* to England sometime in the 1880s, where it remained in the possession of successive family members.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. **The artist who carved this sculpture used repeated lines to create pattern that emphasizes an important part of the figure.**
   Where do you see repeated lines in this sculpture? On the sculpture's face
   The artist placed the figure's hands to emphasize another important part of the sculpture.
   Where are the figure's hands? The center of the body
   The artist used a substance different from wood to emphasize another important part of this figure.
   Where do you see a substance different from wood? Inlaid paua shell eyes.

2. **In general, a human head is about 1/7 of a human body. Put another way, the height of your head multiplied by seven should equal your approximate height. Compare the proportion of the head of this sculpture to the rest of the figure. Is the proportion of head to body the same as that for a real human figure?**

3. **An artist who makes** NATURALISTIC ? **sculpture tries to make an something appear as it would if you saw the real thing in nature. An artist who makes** ABSTRACT ? **sculpture exaggerates certain features and details, while leaving other details out of the sculpture.**
   Do you think this figure looks naturalistic or abstract? Both.
   Which features did the artist exaggerate? Head and hands are large in contrast to the small body. Hair is simplified. Eyes are simplified.

Think

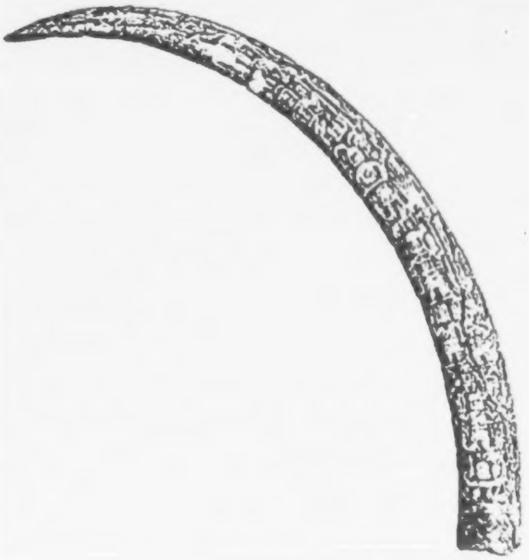
1. **The head of this figure is very large in proportion to the rest of the figure's body.**
   Why would the artist who carved this sculpture want to make the head bigger? Maori consider the head to be the center of personal power.

2. **This carved post supported the main ridge-beam in a meeting house of the Maori. The ridge beam is** SYMBOLIC ? **of the backbone of the ancestor the house is meant to represent.**
   What role does a backbone serve? A backbone is the main support for a skeletal structure.
   How does an ancestor serve as a backbone for a community? Ancestors provide the foundation for many communities, and honoring and remembering them brings communities together

around a common element.
Can you think of ways that we honor and remember our ancestors? Family trees, family photographs, cemeteries and mausoleums mark the graves of ancestors in a special ways, monuments and museums house portraits of and by people we wish to remember.

3. **Some people think objects like this Maori figure should be kept in museums for everyone to learn from and enjoy, even though they were never intended to be displayed that way. Others think that objects like these are treasures of the people they came from and should be returned.** What do you think? **Explain your answer.** No right answer.

Memorial Tusk



MEMORIAL TUSK
Memorial Tusk
Late 18th-early 19th century
(Kingdom of Benin)
Ivory
Miscellaneous Works of Art Fund

KEY IDEAS

- Benin (BEN-een) kingdom was ruled by kings called obas (OH-ba) who were aided by town chiefs called iyases (EE-yah-she) and by palace chiefs called ezomos (EE-zoe-mo).
- A popular Benin story honoring Ezomo Ehenua (ee-HEE-noo-a) celebrates his defeat of the evil Iyase n'Ode (EE-yah-she-n-oh-day).
- SYMBOLIC ? images carved on elephant tusks reinforce the power of important people and remind viewers of Benin's history.

STORY

In the 16th century the oba of Benin died without any heirs, and the once-powerful kingdom of Benin was plunged into a century of chaos. A series of kings claimed the right to rule but failed to hold the kingdom together. Rebel chiefs fought to gain control of the weak kingship. Then a wise oba restored order to the kingdom, but not without making enemies.

Iyase n'Ode (ee-YAH-say en Oh-day), a particularly ambitious town chief and one of the oba's two military commanders, rebelled against the oba. The evil chief continued to make trouble in the kingdom by siding with the jealous rival brother of the next ruler, Oba Akenzua (ah-ken-ZOO-ah) I.

Iyase n'Ode was extremely powerful because he had the ability to turn himself into an elephant. It took the strength and wisdom of another military commander, the Ezomo Ehenua (ee-ZOH-moh ee-he-NEW-ah), to finally defeat Iyase n'Ode and save the kingdom. In honor of this victory, Oba Akenzua I made the title of ezomo, or palace chief, hereditary. Today, Benin ezomos proudly trace their heritage to the historical hero Ezomo Ehenua.[1]

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[1] This account is based largely on Paula Ben-Amos, *The Art of Benin* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980) pp. 32-34.

BACKGROUND

Benin

The kingdom of Benin is located in the tropical rainforest of southern Nigeria. According to the tradition of Benin's Edo (EE-doe) peoples, it was in the 12th century that the Edo established their own kingdom. Over the centuries the geographic boundaries of the kingdom expanded and contracted according to the political power and wealth of the oba. At its height in the late 15th and 16th centuries, Benin was a vast commercial and military power.

Benin was ruled by kings, called obas, who were absolute monarchs, considered to be of divine ancestry.[1] Several groups of chiefs aided the oba in administration of the kingdom. The highest-ranking palace chief, the ezomo, and the highest-ranking town chief, the iyase, acted as the oba's two supreme military commanders. Their military might and administrative influence gave them tremendous wealth and power. The palace and town chiefs often struggled for the oba's favor. In Benin oral history, the iyase is frequently cast as the oba's opponent.

Ivory

During the reign of Oba Akenzua I (about 1715 to 1735) ivory was a highly valued commodity and an important trade item. The Iyase n'Ode's power base was in the village of Oregbeni (oar-egg-ben-EE), the locale of the elephant hunter's guild. That may explain his legendary association in Benin oral tradition with the elephant. His struggles with the oba may have been over control of the profitable ivory trade that began late in the 17th century.

Art in Benin

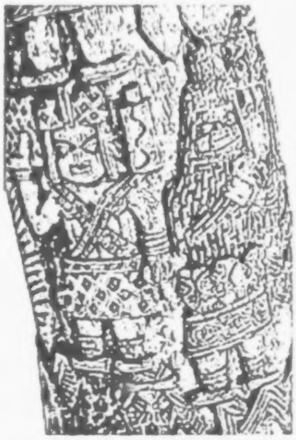
Most Benin art is made to glorify the oba and to pay homage to past obas. This art expresses the special power and privileges of kingship and reinforces the complex hierarchy of the court.

One of the most popular forms of Benin art is the carved ivory tusk. These tusks, which are displayed atop sculpted bronze heads representing Benin's rulers, symbolically record the stories of Benin's illustrious history. Most tusks are carved for altars dedicated to the oba. A few, like this one, are made for the altars of particularly powerful ezomos in their own courts.

Memorial Tusk

Rich patterns of human and animal figures carved in low RELIEF cover the entire surface of this carved elephant's tusk.[2] Working with small, sharp tools, the artists chipped, shaved, and carved away bits of the ivory so that the figures project out from the BACKGROUND core of the tusk.

Many of the images on this tusk celebrate the Ezomo Ehenua's defeat of the Iyase n'Ode and the restoration of the monarchy. Rather than illustrate every detail of an event or story, the artist symbolically evokes the story and its significance. Over generations Benin artists arrived at ABSTRACT images that all viewers could readily recognize and interpret.


Detail of relief carving from the *Memorial Tusk*

An ezomo stands at the base of the tusk. In his right hand he holds a sword to indicate his military prowess. The diagonal band of rectangles across his chest and the rings of small rectangles around his neck represent the coral-beaded REGALIA worn at the oba's court. A typical figure type in Benin art, he is short with small legs and an oversized head. On each side of the ezomo is a barely visible (because of abrasion) abstract image of an elephant's trunk that turns into a hand holding leaves. These symbolize extraordinary physical strength and knowledge.[3]

Above the ezomo stands the oba. He wears similar regalia and grabs an elephant trunk in each of his hands to symbolize his strength. Above his head is a leopard, another symbol of his power, since both the oba and the leopard were admired for their strength, agility, fierceness, and cunning.

Abstract representations of elephants appear throughout this tusk. A few curved lines make its eyes, and many straight lines emanate from a long curving central line to create its powerful trunk. Elephant images such as this one are still identified today as the Iyase n'Ode, the oba's magical and dangerous opponent. By recalling Ezomo Ehuena's victory over the terrible elephant-chief, the tusk asserts and reinforces the power of the present ezomo as well. It also reminds viewers that the right to inherit the position of ezomo was granted by the grateful oba.

[1] The oba was considered to be divine. He was the intermediary between his divine ancestors and the Benin people and, therefore, personally controlled the divine forces that affect the entire kingdom. Traditionally, he was both a politically and a religious leader. Today, the oba maintains religious responsibility for his people, although his political powers have been reduced over time.

[2] The color of ivory also represents an important quality of kinship, because its whiteness recalls the color of chalk, a symbol of ritual purity that is associated with Olokum, God of the Sea. In the 19th century trade in ivory was a monopoly of the king, who was entitled to one tusk from every elephant slain in the kingdom.

[3] The trunk-hand motif - an elephant uses it's trunk like a hand - is a symbol of the strength of a king. The leaves are medicinal forest leaves whose secret properties are known only to special warriors.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. Tell the story of Ezomo Ehenua. Would you say this tusk tells that story, or does it, instead, represent the outcome?
   What symbols tell of the outcome? An ezomo holds a sword in his right hand to signify his military prowess. The oba above the ezomo has an elephant trunk in each hand, to symbolize his strength and dominance over the rebellious elephant-chief.

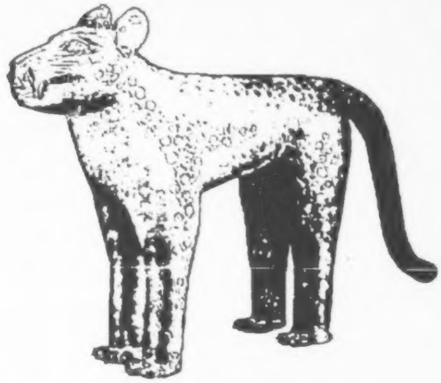
2. An ATTRIBUTE (?) is a distinctive symbolic feature that identifies a character. Find the attributes of the ezomo: elephant symbols, REGALIA, (?) and sword. Use the detail. Find the attributes of the oba: elephants' trunks, regalia, and the leopard.

3. The elephant is the dominant character in this story . How is he represented? Find three bent lines (his forehead) and the long curving line in the center of the tusk, of which many straight lines emanate (his trunk).

Think

1. Recall the story of Ezomo Ehenua.
   What part do elephants play in the Edo myth? Iyase n'Ode could turn himself into an elephant. Why are elephants so important to the Edo people? A source of ivory and also the most powerful animal in Africa.

2. In Edo culture, certain animals are associated with royalty. Elephants are associated with rulers and royalty because of their physical strength. The leopard is an animal associated with the Benin oba.
   What characteristics does a leopard have that an oba might want? Cunning, speed, agility, intelligence, grace.



Leopard
Benin
17th century
Bronze
The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

3. Each carving of a person or animal on this tusk is an instant reminder to a Nigerian viewer of the story of Ezomo Ehenua. What would a picture of a stern queen and seven dwarfs remind you of? A young lion in the company of a meerkat and a warthog? What pictures might you use to recall the literature book you/we are reading?

4. Edo people understand even the most ABSTRACT (?) images on this tusk.
   Why would an Edo artist want to make carvings that are easy for Edo people to identify and understand? Edo people are reminded of their cultural history and the heritage of their rulers.

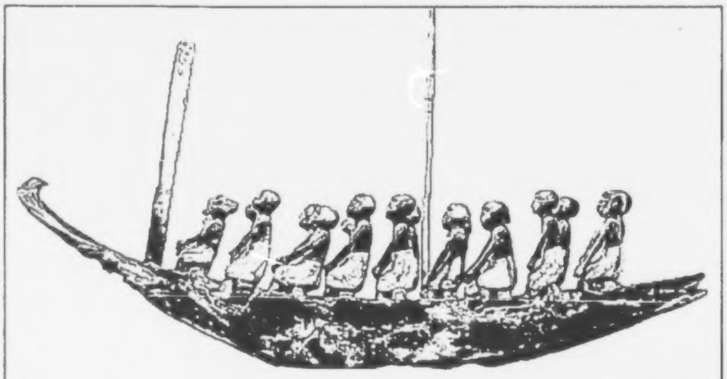
5. RELIEF (?) is a term applied to sculpture when the figures project out from a BACKGROUND. (?) The *memorial tusk* is an example of low relief, in which the figures project only slightly and no part is cut completely away from the background. Although coins are not "carved," they are excellent examples of low relief. Why might an Edo artist choose low relief for carving a tusk like this one? Consider: available tools, hardness of the medium, maintaining the original form of the tusk. Why might an Edo artist want to maintain the original form and shape of the tusk? Recall the importance of elephants in the Edo myth.

6. What is a memorial? Something that keeps remembrance alive.
   Why do you think this is called a *memorial tusk*? It recalls how good service to the oba is rewarded and reminds the Edo people of their traditional mythology.
   What other examples of memorials can you think of? Gravestones or monuments in cemeteries, the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial.

Model Boat with Figures

KEY IDEAS

- The ancient Egyptians believed absolutely in an afterlife of eternal happiness, which they could achieve by leading blameless lives on earth and through the fulfillment of complex funerary rituals after their deaths.



MODEL BOAT WITH FIGURES
2133-1786 B.C.
Polychromed wood
The William Hood Dunwoody Fund

- The *ka* (eternal spirit) of a deceased person had to be conveyed to the city of Abydos, where the passage between the world of the living and the world of the dead was located. A model boat, placed in the tomb as a substitute for a real boat, could transport the *ka* magically.

- This model boat shows us a typical boat used in daily life on the Nile, as well as the oarsmen who rowed it.

STORY

After the great god Osiris was murdered by his brother Seth his grieving widow Isis managed to find almost all of the remains of his body and bandaged them together. This was the first mummy. In this form Osiris traveled to the Underworld to become king over it and judge of the dead. It was believed that his body (or at least his head) was buried at Abydos, a city on the Nile in Upper Egypt, which became the center of his cult worship.

When a high-ranking Egyptian died, his or her body was mummified and placed in a tomb. However, the deceased's *ka* (the person's double, both physically and spiritually) was released at death. It was crucial that the deceased's *ka* arrived safely at Abydos, the place where the passage between the land of the living and the land of the dead could be entered.[1] To help the *ka* to accomplish this journey up or down the Nile, a model boat complete with oarsmen was put in the tomb, because it had the magical power to transport the *ka*.

It was a perilous journey, but assuming that all the funereal rituals had been performed correctly, the *ka* would make it through the passage and be brought to the Hall of Judgement. Here Osiris, sitting on a throne, presided over the other nine great judges (who were all important gods). The deceased first had to convince the judges that he was free of sin (and the gods could not be deceived!) Then the heart of the deceased was weighed against an ostrich feather, the symbol of Mayet, god of Truth and Justice. If the heart weighed exactly the same, this was proof that the deceased was worthy to join the gods in the afterlife.[2] (If not, the deceased was thrown to Ameheit the devourer, a hybrid monster — part lion, part hippopotamus and part crocodile.) Once Osiris announced the verdict, the deceased would live in eternal happiness in the Great Oasis.

[1] Local tradition held that the sun ended its daily course at Abydos and entered the Underworld through a gap in the mountains near the city. The *ka* would also enter here.

[2] The *Book of the Dead* was a compilation of funerary texts which ancient Egyptian scribes composed for the benefit of the dead: spells and incantations, prayers, hymns and litanies, magical formulae, and names and words of great power. E. A. Wallis Budge translated into English and analyzed the most perfectly preserved example (the Papyrus of Ani, 1500-1350 B.C.) and published it in several editions, the first in 1895. See E.A. Wallis Budge, The *Book of the Dead* (New York: Bell Publishing Co., 1960).

BACKGROUND

In the Egyptian approach to life, art and religion were inseparable. All aspects of life were conditioned and guided by belief in the afterlife and immortality. Egyptian funerary art had the magical and vital function of ensuring that the dead person was fully equipped for life in the afterworld. Grave goods found in the Middle Kingdom have included food, furniture, and wooden figurines of offering-bearers and other servants performing tasks intended to provide essential services and commodities.

In the ancient Egyptians' view, the continued existence of the world and its inhabitants depended to a large degree on the fulfillment of natural cycles. Human life was also viewed as cyclical which, like the re-emergence of the sun each dawn, would be endlessly repeated throughout eternity. Life on earth was a transient but necessary stage; death was regarded not as an end, but merely as the next stage towards another type of existence.[1] Within this universal scheme, the god Osiris symbolized the creative forces and cyclical renewal of nature. He was considered as the great benefactor who brought the knowledge of agriculture and civilization to humanity. The Osiris cult appealed to the emotions of common people, and provided even to them a way to attain eternal life. For many centuries a miracle play was held annually at Abydos, in which the sufferings, death and resurrection of Osiris were reenacted, an event that drew thousands of people from every part of Egypt.

Model Boat with Figures

This model boat, equipped with eighteen oarsmen, a mast and a mount for the steering oar, comes from a tomb near Meir in Egypt. All the component pieces were carved from wood and painted in color, some of which remains. The boat would have had carefully painted details of deck planking and structural beams. It is an accurate representation of vessels used in daily life on the Nile. The figures, too, are fairly realistic. As is conventional in ancient Egyptian art, the bodies of male figures are painted red. The figures all wear black, helmet-shaped wigs, and most of their faces still show the heavy black eyeliner all Egyptians commonly wore.[2]

Miniature boats form the largest single category of models found in the tombs of the Old and Middle Kingdom periods. Boats were important to Egyptian commerce, which was centered on the Nile River. They were used for transportation, for fishing and for netting wild fowl. Boats also played a major role in religion, because the gods used them to travel across the sky and through the underworld.

Sometimes two boats were provided, one with a mast (for sailing south, against the current) and one with only oarsmen (for sailing north, with the current). Since this boat has a mast, it must have had to sail south. Originally it may have had an awning as protection from the bright sun.

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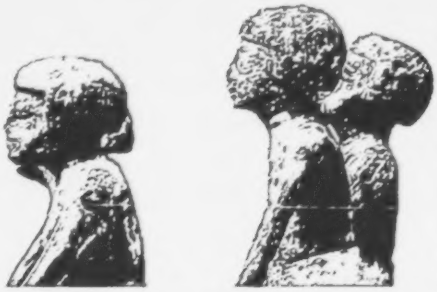
[1] See the excellent description in John H. Taylor, *Death and Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[2] During all periods and all dynasties in Egyptian history, eye makeup was used daily by both men and women. A preparation of kohl was applied with a stick and extended the lower line of the eye. Kohl possessed disinfectant and fly-deterrent properties, and may have provided protection from the intense sun.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

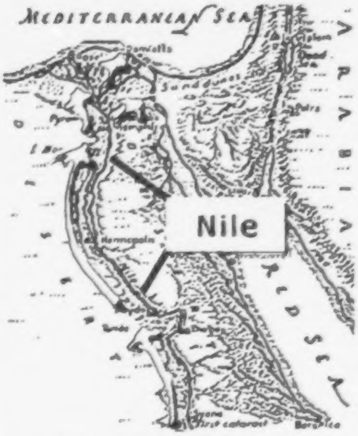
1. **Count the people in the boat.**
   What are they doing? Rowing, the oars are missing from the model.
   What does this work of art tell you about Egypt's weather? The boat suggests available water, wood suggests trees, clothing on the figures suggests hot weather.



Detail of pinholes on several figures' shoulders from the *Model Boat with Figures*

2. Do you think the artist carved everything out of one piece of wood or did she carve some pieces separately and attach them? The pin hole at several figures' shoulders indicate where separately carved arms were attached.
   Compare this technique of adding material with the subtractive process used on the Maori post-figure.

3. **Look up the Nile River, Egypt's largest river, in an atlas or encyclopedia.**
   In what direction does the current of the Nile flow? South to North.
   In order to sail against the current of the Nile River, what direction would a boat have to travel? A boat with a mast was most likely used to sail against the current.
   Was this model of a boat meant to travel with the current or against the current? A sail would have assisted the oarsmen in traveling against a current.



Map showing the Nile and indicating flow direction

Think

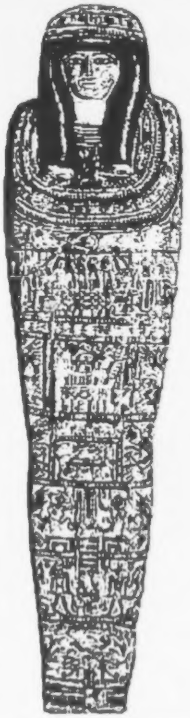
1. **In Egyptian religion, life after death was much the same as life before death. The spirit of a person, called *ka*, traveled in a boat to the city of Abydos to enter the land of the dead. The model boat, placed in the tomb, was critical for this mythical journey.**
   What else might one except to find in a tomb for the safe journey and passage of the *ka*? Food, beer, furniture, games.

2. **The Egyptians who made this model boat did not consider it a work of art, instead it was a necessary part of a tomb for travel to the afterlife. Today, the model is displayed in an art museum. Do you think it is art? Why or why not?**

Mummy Case of Lady Teshat

KEY IDEAS

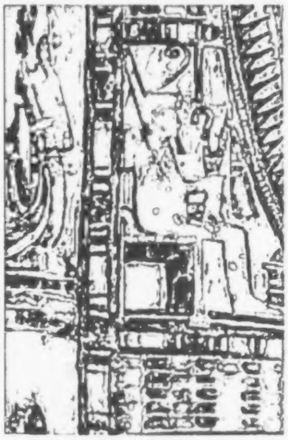
- The myth of a god that dies every year at the time of harvest, and is miraculously restored to life when the grain sprouts, is common to the mythologies of all agricultural cultures in the Mediterranean basin.
- The myths associated with Osiris (oh-SIGH-rus), the Egyptian god of the Underworld, reflect the agricultural cycle of death and rebirth and explain the origins of mummification in Egyptian burial ritual.
- The ancient Egyptians believed that if certain gods were worshiped and proper procedures followed, the souls of the dead would live on in the Underworld.
- The pictures that decorated mummy cases and coffins were highly symbolic and standardized.



MUMMY CASE OF LADY TESHAT
1085-710 B.C. (21st-24th Dynasty)
Painted and varnished linen
The William Hood Dunwoody Fund

STORY

The kind and gentle god Osiris ruled on earth for many years and brought the gifts of civilization and agriculture to Egypt. He let his wife-sister, Isis (EYE-sus), rule Egypt for a short time while he traveled the world to spread law and order and to teach people farming skills. His brother, Seth, became jealous of Osiris's popularity and power. So, upon Osiris's return, Seth murdered him, put his body in an elaborate cedar coffin, and cast it into the Nile River.



Detail of Osiris from the *Mummy Case Of Lady Teshat*

The coffin washed ashore at Byblos (BIB-lus) in Lebanon, where a tamarisk tree arose and encased it. Impressed by the tree's tremendous size, the king of Byblos had it cut down and placed as a pillar in his main hall. Isis searched for her husband's body and eventually located it in the pillar in the king's hall. She then won permission to bring his remains back to Egypt. Seth, furious that his brother's remains had been retrieved, cut Osiris's body into pieces and scattered them throughout the land.

Isis set out again to find her husband, a much more difficult task this time. Wherever she found a part of his body, she created a wax duplicate of the part; she

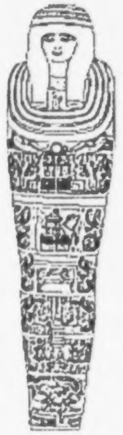
Statuette of Isis
1st century A.D.
Bronze
Gift of The Morse Foundation

presented the wax part to the local priest and demanded that it be placed in a temple and worshiped, so that her husband's memory would be preserved.

When nearly all the body parts were gathered, Isis used her own great magic, and the help of several other gods, to put Osiris back together. They preserved his body and wrapped it in linen bandages, creating the first mummy and establishing the funereal ritual for all subsequent burials of important people. Magically, Isis breathed life back into Osiris and the god-king rose from the dead. But instead of living on earth, Osiris chose to rule in the Underworld. He left earthly rule up to his son, Horus (HOR-us).

BACKGROUND

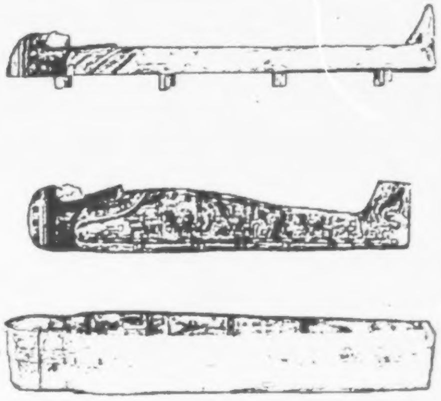
We are unusually well informed about the Osiris myth because it was the only Egyptian myth written down, and in detail, by an ancient Greek author, Plutarch (AD 45/50-125). Osiris was first worshiped only as a god of vegetation because his life cycle - birth, death, and rebirth - paralleled the growth cycle of the crops on which Egyptians depended. He was later associated with other natural cycles that created order in the Egyptian world, including the flooding of the Nile and the rising and setting of the sun. Many Egyptians came to consider him a one-time earthly ruler, or pharaoh (FAIR-oh), and some viewed him as god of the moon. Eventually Osiris was worshipped throughout Egypt as the god of the Underworld, where he chose to live after his resurrection. In this role, he was among the highest ranked Egyptian dieties.



Line Art Illustration of the *Mummy Case of Lady Teshat*
One page printable version

Initially, Osiris was worshiped mainly by the pharaohs and their royal families because only they, considered descendants of the gods, were entitled to the privilege of eternal life. However, by the 18th Dynasty (1551-1310 B.C.), everyone who worshiped Osiris was promised the possibility of life after death. It was as god of the Underworld that he enjoyed his greatest popularity, for he gave those who worshipped him the hope of an eternally happy life in another world ruled over by a just and good king. In fact, in Egyptian culture the afterlife was regarded as much more important than earthly life, which was seen as only a temporary period of preparation for eternal life.

As god of the Underworld, Osiris appeared regularly on funereal objects, including mummy coffins and cases. His presence assured that the dead man or woman would, like Osiris, rise and live again.



Mummy cases were often placed inside of decorated coffins

Mummification

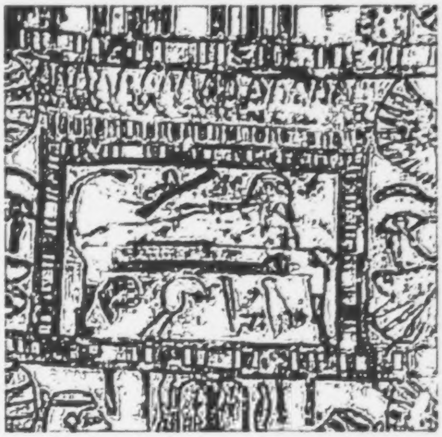
Because the Egyptians believed that each person possessed a ka (kah), a spirit double which lived on in the Underworld, they preserved the dead through a complex system of embalming and mummification. The prepared bodies were often enclosed in cases like this one, made of plastered, painted, and varnished linen and were then placed in decorated coffins. They preserved the body because the ka could live on only if it had a place to reside (a body or a ka statue, for example). Cases and coffins are covered with standardized image symbols to assist the ka in its passage to the Afterworld. These symbolic characters, called hieroglyphics, make up a system of writing used in ancient Egypt, in which figures or objects represent words or sounds. In fact, scholars have translated the words on this coffin.

This mummy case encloses the remains of Lady Teshat (TEH-shet), a fifteen-year-old girl. Because her father was closely associated with the pharaoh, she received an elaborate burial.

Detail of Osiris

Symbolic pictures of Osiris appear in several places on *Lady Teshat's mummy case.* Each image embodies ATTRIBUTES (?) that identify the god. In this detail from the right shoulder, he is depicted as an enthroned king, reinforcing his role as ruler of the dead. (See detail.) He holds a shepherd's crook and whip, SYMBOLS (?) of his authority. He wears the red crown of Lower Egypt decorated with a curly ostrich plume, to signify his earthly life and reign. His false beard is like those the Egyptian pharaohs wore to indicate their godly status. The green color of Osiris's skin, associated with vegetation, symbolizes life after death.

Osiris is tightly wrapped like a mummy in an orange-red garment, an indication that he lived on after death through mummification. His stiff pose is also due in part to the FORMULAIC (?) way Egyptians showed the human body; they regularly depicted the most characteristic aspects of a figure. The head, legs, and feet are shown in profile (from the side), while the eye and shoulder are represented as though seen from the front. His two hands, freed from the mummy wrappings, are folded across his chest and hold the symbols of his divine power: a whip and a sceptor in the form of a shepherd's crook.



Detail of Osiris from the *Mummy Case of Lady Teshat*

At the base of the throne is a stacked form, which might be a djed (jed) pillar. The djed pillar represents Osiris's backbone (certainly an appropriate image for a mummy case), recovered by Isis; to the Egyptians it symbolized stability and continuity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. Osiris was the first Egyptian to be mummified and he appears three times on this mummy case. How has the artist shown that Osiris was mummified? Hint: Look at the lower half of his body.

2. What colors did the artist use to depict Osiris in this image? Look at his hands and face. Is this a natural skin color?

3. An outline is a line that describes the outside edge of an object or figure.
   Where do you see outlines in the figure of Osiris? Torso and legs, crown, face, wrists, and hands.
   Does the outline make the figure of Osiris appear flat or THREE-DIMENSIONAL? (?) Heavy outlines weight the figure down and make it appear flat.

4. **An** ATTRIBUTE (?) **is a distinctive symbolic feature that identifies a character. Find Osiris's attributes: mummy wrappings, throne, shepherd's crook and whip, red crown with ostrich plume, and beard.**
   Do you think you could identify Osiris by his face alone, without his attributes? Why or why not? Egyptian figural STYLE (?) is standardized. Human figures generally look the same. They have no distinct individual characteristics.

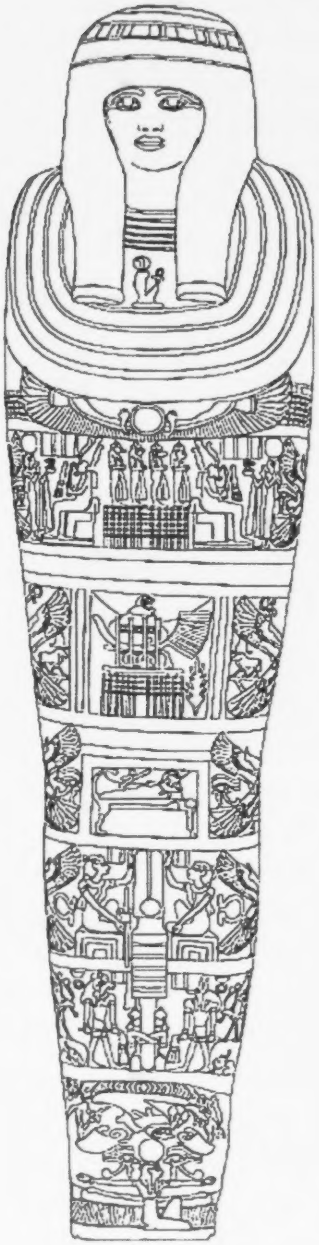
Think

1. **Osiris is god of vegetation, god of the Underworld, and god of the moon.**
   Which of these roles do you think his green skin refers to? God of vegetation.)
   In what ways does green suggest life and growth? The color green in plants indicates life; green is associated with spring, a time of growth.

2. **Why do you think it was important to have Osiris represented on this mummy case? Recall Osiris's role as god of the Underworld. How did Osiris help the ka in its passage to the Underworld?**

3. Do you think the Egyptian artist who painted this mummy case was interested in showing us what Osiris really looked like, in telling his story, or in showing us his special powers? **Explain your answer.** Parts of Osiris's story are recalled in his mummy wrapping and green skin. Special powers.

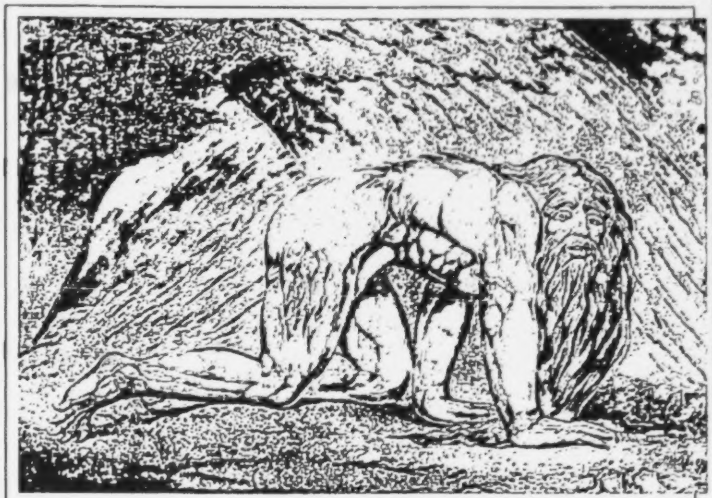
Back to Text



Nebuchadnezzar

KEY IDEAS

- The Old Testament bible story of King Nebuchadnezzar's (NEB-uh-kad-NEZ-ar) dream and madness is an interpretation of an historical event that teaches a moral lesson.
- Reacting against the rationalism of his times, William Blake emphasized imagination and emotion in his art.
- Blake's expressive PRINT ? of King Nebuchadnezzar illustrates his belief that the animal aspects of human nature are the counterpart of reason.



NEBUCHADNEZZAR
William Blake
1795
Color print finished in pen and watercolor
Miscellaneous purchase funds

STORY

A harsh and powerful Babylonian king named Nebuchadnezzar dreamed one night of a great tree in the midst of the earth. Abundant with leaves and fruit, the tree grew until its top reached heaven. A heavenly being appeared in Nebuchadnezzar's dream and ordered him to cut down the tree, leaving only its roots bound in iron and bronze among the field grasses. The same heavenly being then decreed that the king's mind be changed from a man's to a beast's.

Nebuchadnezzar did not understand his dream, so he called on the prophet Daniel to interpret it.[1] Daniel said that Nebuchadnezzar was the strong tree in his dream. He said that the dream was a decree from God that the mighty king who ruled without care for anyone but himself would be driven to dwell with beasts so that he would recognize God's superior power. Nebuchadnezzar disregarded the dream's warning and continued to misuse his power. When he failed to show mercy to those he oppressed, the dream came true. Driven from human society, Nebuchadnezzar found himself eating grass as oxen do. He was drenched by the dew of heaven, and his hair grew into eagles' feathers and his nails turned into birds' talons.[2]

[1] The interpretation of dreams was very important to Babylonian rulers. Using their great skills in astronomy, the Chaldeans (people of an area within the empire) used the movement and positions of the planets and stars in order to predict the plans of the gods, and thus the future

[2] Daniel 4:1-37.

BACKGROUND

Nebuchadnezzar

England
Ancient Babylonia

The story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and madness is one of several moralizing, allegorical interpretations of historical events in the Book of

Daniel, written in the 2nd century B.C. to illustrate the power of God. Although there is no historical proof, it is thought that Nebuchadnezzar may have suffered from a mental illness called Insania Zoanthropia, which causes humans to act like animals.[1]

The Book of Daniel

Although written in the first person, the author of the book of Daniel was actually a pious Jew living under the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, 167-164 B.C.[2] To encourage his suffering fellow believers, he tells six stories, set in earlier days in Babylon just before and after the Persian conquest, which illustrate how faithful Jews, loyally practicing their religion, were enabled by divine aid to triumph over their enemies. The memory of Nebuchadnezzar was still strong at the time of this writing because he had crushed two Jewish revolts and then had destroyed the temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.[3]

Nebuchadnezzar II ruled over the Babylonian empire from 605 to 562 B.C. The city of Babylon was located in the Euphrates river in the region of present day Iraq. The kingdom of Juda, in southern Palestine, was caught in a power struggle between the Babylonian empire and imperial Egypt. When in 587-586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar attacked and destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, he deported many of its inhabitants to Babylon. During this period, known as the Babylonian Exile (586-539 B. C.), many Jews prospered economically in Babylon, and not all continued to observe Jewish law faithfully.

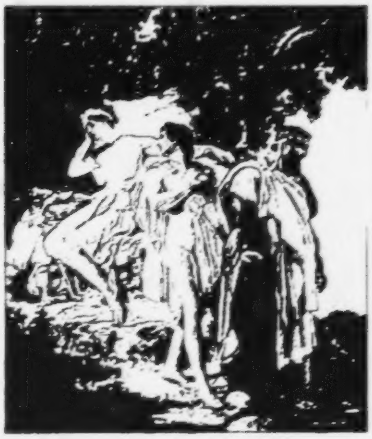
William Blake

The visionary poet and artist William Blake despised the emphasis on rational thought so popular in 18th-century England. Sir Isaac Newton's mathematic and scientific discoveries, which proved the existence of universal laws and the value of scientific reasoning, heralded the Age of Enlightenment in Europe. Advancements in areas such as optics, chemistry, and biology encouraged intellectuals to put their trust in nature, as understood by reason, rather than in God. Many people believed that they could rationally unlock nature's secrets to benefit their own lives.

Blake, on the other hand, believed that imagination, not reason, was the dominant force of human nature. He rebelled against the art establishment and created his own artistic vocabulary, often illustrating apocalyptic scenes from the Bible. His bestial images, including his 1795 version of Nebuchadnezzar, illustrated the uncontrollable, irrational side of human beings.[4] He apparently intended this image of the mad king to be paired with an image of Newton that represented rational thought.

Nebuchadnezzar

In this hand-colored print Blake depicts Nebuchadnezzar as part animal and part man. The once-mighty Nebuchadnezzar crawls on his hands and knees, and his feet sport bird's talons as described in the Book of Daniel. His golden hair, which was said to grow like an eagle's feathers, trails down his back and over his thighs. His lengthy beard drags beneath his taut body. Nebuchadnezzar's parted lips, furrowed brow, heavy eyelids, and especially his staring eyes all lend his face an expression of helplessness. The king's strong muscled body, rendered in great detail, seems startlingly at odds with his mental instability.



A typical example of Neoclassical painting

Telemachus and Eucharis
Raymond Auguste Quinsac Monvoisin
1824
The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Nebuchadnezzar's crawling outdoors, nude, leaves no doubt of his madness. The large twisted tree trunks and foliage behind him may refer to the large tree in his dream. The imaginative and emotional tone of Blake's stunning picture of Nebuchadnezzar relates it to works by other artists called ROMANTICS, (?) who reacted against the staid NEOCLASSICAL STYLE (?) with dramatic, often apocalyptic images. But the distinctive style of this piece, marked by strong contour lines, is uniquely Blake's.

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[1] *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* with Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 1067.

[2] A ruler of the Seleucid Dynasty, whose capital was Antioch in present day Syria.

[3] *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.1126

[4] In about 1790, Blake first used this image of Nebuchadnezzar in a book he wrote and illustrated called *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. Before showing the image, tell the story. Show the image and ask:
   How does the image of Nebuchadnezzar compare with the image in your mind as the story was told? No right answer

2. What parts of the story of Nebuchadnezzar has Blake put into his PRINT? (?) The eagle-feather hair, the talon nails, crawling on all fours like an ox.

3. Does the figure of Nebuchadnezzar look more like a man or a beast? No right answer.
   Which features are manlike? Body structure and skin, facial features such as eyes, nose, mouth.
   Which features are animal-like? Hair, including facial hair, eagle talons on hands, crouched body posture and position of head seem unnatural for an upright human.

4. How has the artist made Nebuchadnezzar look strong? Very muscular body.
   How has he made Nebuchadnezzar look weak or afraid? Facial expression, body posture.

5. Describe the colors and lines Blake used throughout this PRINT. (?)
   How do his choices of color and line associate the human figure with the surrounding landscape? Same colors used for figure and landscape. The quality of lines: thickness, length, repeated lines that make up patterns, curves and direction of lines are similar in the figure and the landscape.

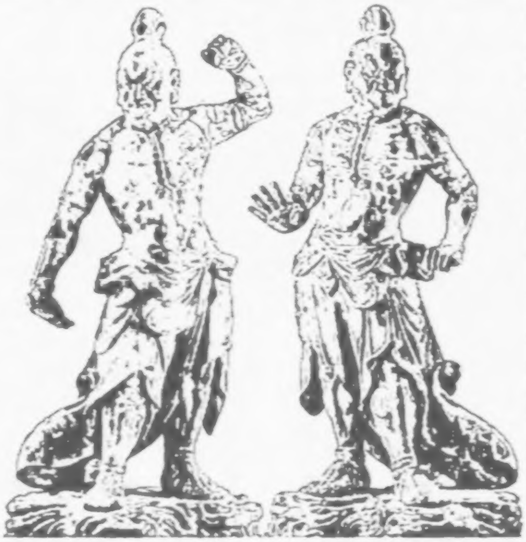
Think

1. Was Nebuchadnezzar a real person? Yes.
   Does the story of Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel describe a real event? No historical evidence to support the story.
   Nebuchadnezzar's transformation into a beast was a punishment for mistreating his subjects. He "abused his power." Do you think he deserved this punishment?
   Why is abuse of power a bad thing? Because the victims have no access to justice; there is no rule of law. Dictators are almost always overthrown because they abuse their absolute power. Think of Hitler, Mussolini, Ceausescu [recent dictator of Romania].

Nio Guardian Figures

KEY IDEAS

- The Japanese story of Kongorikishi (congo-ree-kaw-she) is about the use of physical force to defend the Buddha and his worshipers against evil.
- The warrior rulers of 14th-century Japan valued bravery, honor, and strength.
- The enormous size and energetic poses of these Nio (NEE-oh) guardian sculptures made them imposing forces outside the gates of a Buddhist temple complex.



DRAGON ROBE FOR AN EMPRESS OF CHINA
1821-50 (Ch'ing dynasty)
Embroidered silk, gold thread
The John R. Van Derlip Fund

STORY

Once there was a king who had two wives. His first wife bore a thousand children who all decided to become monks and follow the Buddha's law. His second wife had only two sons. The youngest was named Non-o (NON-oh) and helped his monk brothers with their worship. The eldest, Kongorikishi, however, had a much more aggressive personality. He vowed to protect the Buddha and his worshipers by fighting against evil and ignorance.

BACKGROUND

Buddhism began in India, and then became part of Chinese culture. Around 550 A.D. Buddhism was introduced into Japan through Korea. This non-native religion became an important part of Japanese culture during the Nara period (710-790 A. D.), especially among the aristocracy.

Korea
China
Japan
India

Nio

Kongorikishi was the first of the heavenly kings, called Nio. The Nio were originally Hindu gods in India, who were adopted by the Japanese into the Buddhist pantheon. The Nio, also called Kongo, all came to be considered aggressive guardian deities in the tradition of Kongorikishi. Within the generally pacifist traditions of Buddhism, stories of Nio guardians like Kongorikishi justified the use of physical force to protect cherished values and beliefs against evil.

Samurai

Widespread discontent with the dictatorship of the Taira (tie-RAH) clan in Kyoto (key-OH-toe) caused an enormous uprising in 1180. Five years of brutal civil war ensued, ending when the Minamoto clan overthrew the Taira. The Minamoto handed control of the new government to a group of loyal warriors, called samurai (SAM-oo-rye). The samurai unified their forces under a code known as the "way of the warrior" which valued bravery, honor, and strength.

In art, the luxurious tastes and refinement of the Kyoto nobility were replaced by the directness and simplicity of the samurai. The dynamic spirit of the age demanded art that was similarly big and brash. The civil war had severely damaged many temples, and artists set about rebuilding, restoring, and replacing lost sculptures. Among the many sculptures produced were pairs of IDEALIZED (?) but NATURALISTIC (?) large *Nio guardian figures* that stood outside Buddhist temple complexes.

Detail showing decorative features from the *Nio Guardian Figures*

Nio Guardian Figures

These *Nio guardian figures* named Misshaku (mish-AH-koo) Kongo (congo) and Naeren (NAY-ren) Kongo (congo) represent the use of overt power and latent power, respectively. They display the energy and realism characteristic of late 14th-century Japanese sculpture.[1]

Standing on banks of fluffy clouds, the guardians are enormously muscled half-nude figures. Their features have been skillfully exaggerated by an artist well versed in the human form. Bulging muscles in their huge chests and arms communicate power even at a great distance. This exaggerated REALISM (?) continues in the Nios' popping veins, extended jaws, and even in their delicate fingernails and toenails. The guardians' hair, pulled tightly into topknots, adds to their imposing height.

For all of their power, the Nio are also decorative. Their flower-shaped nipples and rippled rib cages form an elegant PATTERN. (?) The dark and light areas on the sculptures are traces of GESSO (?) and black LACQUER (?) that once covered their surfaces. Flesh-colored pigments covered portions of the lacquer.

The Nio exhibit tremendous energy. Their arms, legs, and clublike feet dramatically jut into space, and drapery swirls violently around them. The Nio's bulging eyes, furrowed brows, flaring nostrils, and distorted grimaces bring their faces to life.

Conceived as a pair, the Nio complement each other. Misshaku Kongo, representing power in action, bares his teeth and raises his fist in action, while Naeren Kongo, representing potential might, holds his mouth tightly closed and waits with both arms tensed but lowered.

Each Nio figure represents a particular cosmic sound. Misshaku Kongo's open mouth sounds out "ah," meaning birth. Naeren Kongo sounds "om," meaning death. Thus, in two cosmic sounds life is

Detail of Misshaku Kongo making the cosmic sound "ah" from the *Nio Guardian Figures*

Detail of Naeren Kongo's making the cosmic sound "om" from the *Nio Guardian Figures* encapsulated at a temple doorway, reminding viewers that life is fleeting and that good karma is necessary to avoid rebirth on the Wheel of Life.[2]

[1] The Nio guardians were created by a joined woodblock carving technique called *yosegi*. Each is created from many pieces of wood pegged together. This allowed the artists to create monumental figures with dynamic poses. The seams and cracks were covered with fabric or paper. The surface was then covered with layers of gesso, (baked seashells and water) and black lacquer. Details such as the pupils of the eyes and the decorative pattern on the drapery were also painted.

[2] Buddhists believe that everyone is subject to what they call the Wheel of Life, that is, that all souls are doomed to be reincarnated endlessly unless they gather enough good karma (good deeds, good spirituality) to become enlightened, and able to enter nirvana (extinction of the self). Even if one cannot earn enough good karma to become enlightened, good or bad karma decides what one's next life will be like.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. Tell the story of Kongorikishi. In the generally pacifistic Buddhist philosophy, this story justified the use of physical force to defend the Buddha and his worshippers against evil. How do these guardian figures, over six feet tall, personify physical force? Consider: size, musculature, body type, and pose.

2. Compare these two guardian figures.
   What is the same about them? Height, weight, musculature and body type, body decoration and jewelry, hairstyle, facial features, garments.
   What is different? Poses or gestures, facial expressions.

3. What are these figures standing on? Clouds.
   How can you tell? Bases are carved in swirling mist-like patterns.
   What does that tell us about their domain? Heavenly domain rather than earthly.

4. One of the figures stands for potential power, and the other stands for direct action.
   Which is which? How can you tell? The figure with its fist raised, Misshaku Kongo, stands for power in action. Raised fist, stiff right arm and open mouth with bared teeth suggest that this figure is physically threatening. Explain that Misshaku Kongo's mouth sounds out "ah", meaning birth. The figure with its arms lowered, Naeren Kongo, stands for potential power, or power withheld for the moment. Lowered bent arms close to the body and hand extended in a halting gesture, mouth closed, suggest that this figure's power is contained, in control. Explain that Naeren Kongo's mouth sounds out "om", meaning death.

Detail of clouds from the *Nio Guardian Figures*

5. **These Nio Guardian figures would have stood outside the entrance to a Buddhist temple. Look carefully at these figures standing side by side. Is one made for the left side of an entrance and one made for the right?**
   Which is which? How can you tell? Misshaku Kong, with raised fist, was meant for the left side and Naeren Kongo, with arms lowered, was meant for the right. In this configuration, Naeren Kongo's lowered arm fits neatly under Misshaku Kongo's raised fist, their extended legs are mirror images of each other, they face away from each other rather than toward each other and their garments flow outward, away from the entrance that would have been between them.

Think

1. **These wooden Nio Guardian figures were originally covered with black lacquer. Some traces of the lacquer still appear on the sculptures.**
   Would they be more or less threatening if they still had their black coating? Explain. No right answer.

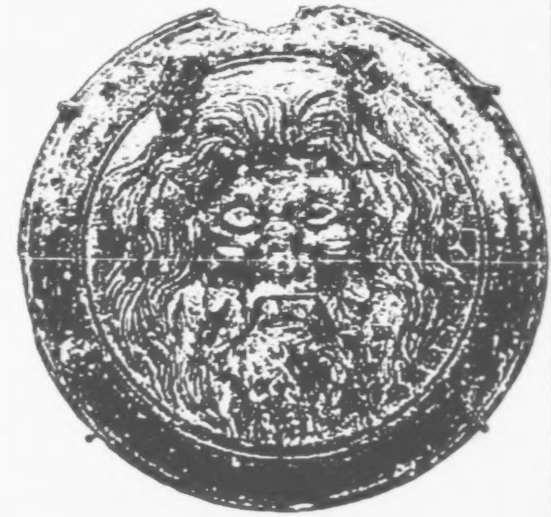
2. **Nio Guardian figures served as symbolic protection at a Buddhist temple hundreds of years ago.**
   What are symbols of protection that we see today? Operation Identification stickers on front doors, McGruff safe house signs, bars on windows, traffic signs serve as protection for drivers.

3. **Buddhism is a nonviolent philosophy.**
   What message would these sculptures convey to the Buddhist worshippers who pass between them? Recall the story of Kongorikishi. Rather than intimidate Buddhist worshippers the Nio Guardian figures were meant to reassure them that they were protected against evil forces.

Oceanus

KEY IDEAS

- According to Greco-Roman creation mythology, the Titan (TIE-tun) Oceanus (oh-CHAY-a-nus) ruled the great river that encircled the earth.
- Affluent Romans displayed their wealth by decorating their furnishings with ornamental pieces such as this bronze ornament, called a BOSS. (?)
- This Roman boss depicts Oceanus as a realistic human being rather than as a monster or force of nature.



OCEANUS
1st - 2nd centuries
A.D. (Empire)
Bronze
The Lillian Z. Turnblad
Memorial Fund

STORY

Long before the world existed, there was Chaos—immeasurable, dark, and wild. Out of Chaos came Night and Erebus (AIR-a-bus), a dim place. All was still, black, silent, and without end until Love emerged. Love brought Light and Day, which then produced Earth. No one can recall just how any of this happened. Then Earth, called Gaea (GUY-ah), produced the boundless blue Heaven, called Uranus (YUR-a-nus). The union of Heaven and Earth produced gigantic monstrous children with overwhelming power. Among their children were the one-eyed Cyclops (SIGH-clops), the 100-handed Hecatoncheires (hec-a-TAHN-churs), and the mighty natural forces, the Titans.

Six female and six male Titans ruled the universe. One of them was called Oceanus because he ruled the great river Ocean that encircled the earth and formed its outermost limits. Oceanus and his Titan wife, Tethys (TEH-thees), had 3,000 sons and 3,000 daughters. Their sons were the spirits of the rivers. Their daughters, known as Oceanids, were spirits of streams and springs. Eventually, the Titans' children destroyed their parents and became the gods of the Greek world.

BACKGROUND

Creation Myth

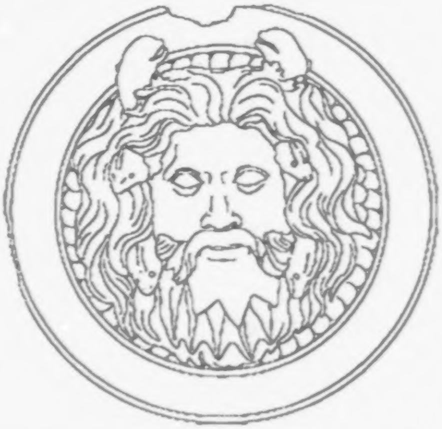
Greek creation myths, and their Roman counterparts, explained the origin, structure, and nature of the world. These mythologies were central to ancient religions, though as time passed they came to be viewed as literature more than anything. Hesiod (HES-ee-ud), the Greek poet-historian, wrote the most detailed account of the Greeks' creation mythology. He presented creation in the form of a genealogical chart. According to Hesiod, the six Titan couples produced the first generation of Greek deities.

The ancient Romans adapted much of the Greeks' mythology, including their notion of creation. In many cases, Roman household gods, practical forces in daily life, took on the fabulous personalities and exciting exploits of the Greek gods.

Roman Empire
The Roman Empire was born in 31 B.C. when Octavian Caesar, later known as Augustus, triumphed after 90 years of civil war. Augustus and his immediate successors in the 1st century A.D. promoted the arts in order to display the grandeur of their empire.

Realism
The general, idealized figures of ancient Greek sculpture, frequently emulated by early Romans, gave way to realistic portraiture in the 1st century A.D. The Romans, who valued the family, recorded the faces and character traits of important family members in realistic portraits. Although this boss is very small, there is evidence of realistic treatment in the face, such as the indications of wrinkles on the forehead and cheeks. Realism is perhaps most evident in the irregular profile of the nose, ending in a rounded form, which would have seemed unattractive. (An ideal nose, sometimes called a Grecian nose, sloped in a straight line from the top of the forehead to its tip.) Roman artists portrayed gods and other mythical beings with similar REALISM and individuality.

Furnishings
Affluent Romans liked to display their wealth in elaborately decorated furnishings. Ornamental pieces, called bosses, adorned the juncture points of tables, stools, and the curving heads and footboards of luxurious bronze and wooden couches. The finest pieces incorporated detailed INLAY work in silver, ivory, and tortoiseshell.



Line Art Illustration of the *Oceanus* boss
Full page printable version

Oceanus
This circular bronze boss depicts the Titan Oceanus. His bearded face projects out from a BACKGROUND of decorative scales. In keeping with the artistic realism of the time, Oceanus is portrayed as a bearded old man, not as a monster or an abstract force of nature. Locks of wavy hair frame his heavy face. His eyes are inlaid silver, and silver and copper inlays highlight his cheeks, nose, and forehead. Two dolphins leap from the top of his head, suggesting the form of a crown and alluding to Oceanus's role as an aquatic ruler. Two fish dive among the locks of his hair near his temples, and two others emerge from his beard.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. Review the story of Oceanus.
   What did Oceanus rule over as a Titan? The ocean.
   Can you see evidence of his role as ruler of the ocean in this bronze? Head emerges out of a

"scaly" BACKGROUND. (?) Two dolphins rise out of his head at the crown. Fish swim in and out of his hair and beard.

2. **A boss such as this one would have decorated a piece of furniture. With this purpose in mind, how big do you think this is? Find an object of similar size-4 1/8 inches.**
   What kind of furniture do you think this was made for? A chair? A bed? Why? No right answer since we don't know for sure.

3. SUBTRACTIVE SCULPTURE (?) **is made by removing unwanted material from a solid mass, such as wood or marble.** ADDITIVE SCULPTURE (?) **is made by building up a form by molding or** MODELING (?) **a material such as clay.**
   Is this bronze boss an example of additive or subtractive sculpture? In bronze casting, an additive method of sculpting, an artist models the sculpture in clay, then uses the model to make a mold for molten bronze.

4. **Artists throughout time have often** EMBELLISHED (?) **their sculptures, adding material to the basic medium for decorative and/or expressive effects. Here the artist embellished this sculpture with** INLAID (?) **silver eyes and silver and copper inlay on cheeks, nose, and forehead.**
   What function do these embellishments serve? Adding precious metals make the boss more valuable, expressing the wealth of its owner.

Think

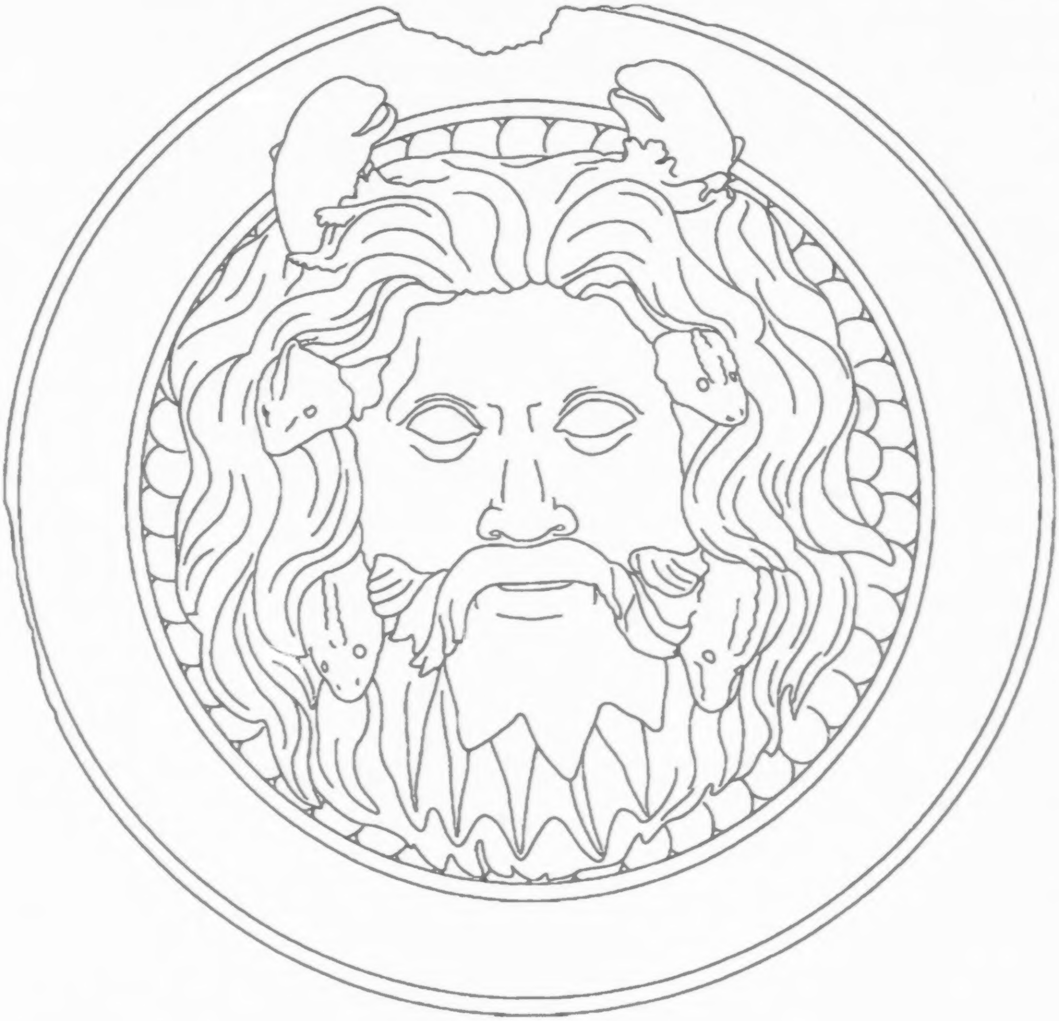
1. **This bronze boss was used to decorate a piece of furniture in ancient Rome.**
   How do we decorate furniture today? Carved wood, paint, combining different materials such as wood and metal, much like ancient Romans!

2. **Ancient Romans placed great emphasis on realistic portraiture and so chose to represent the natural force of the ocean, Oceanus the Titan, as an individual, realistic human. How would you represent a natural force such as the wind, or an earthquake? Would your representation be human? Animal?** ABSTRACT? (?) NON-OBJECTIVE? (?) **Explain your answer.**

3. **The artist who made this bronze boss** INLAID (?) **it with silver and copper to make it more valuable. Today people still increase the value of objects by adding precious materials.**
   What are some examples? Jewelry with precious stones such as diamonds are more valuable than plain metals; coats with fur trim; floors inlaid with custom tile or stone; cars with leather upholstery; a ceiling with GILDED (?) or molded decoration.
   Are there other ways we make things more valuable? Logos, designer names or sports SYMBOLS (?) on clothing. Hand-made items are often more valuable than their machine-made counterparts.

4. **This bronze boss is a Roman interpretation of a Greek myth. Is one culture's interpretation of another's mythology an authentic interpretation? Why or why not? Would we consider this more genuine or legitimate if it had been made by a Greek artist? Why or why not? Explore the other works of art in the World Mythology set of images.**
   What other examples do you find of an artist depicting a myth from another culture? Theseus, Orpheus and Eurydice, Phaeton, Medusa.

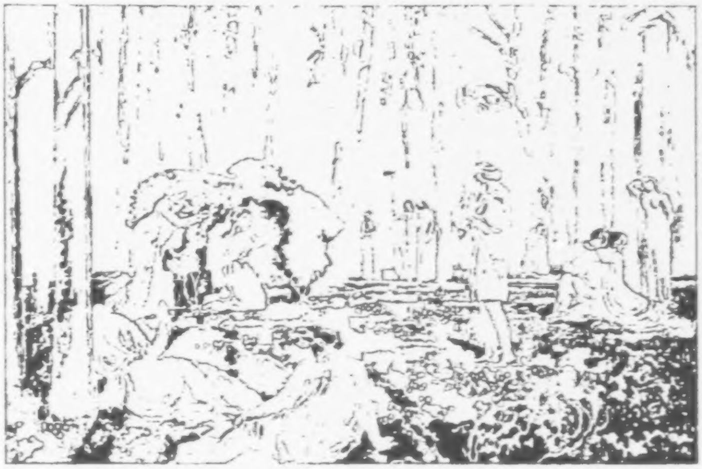
Back to Text



Orpheus and Eurydice

KEY IDEAS

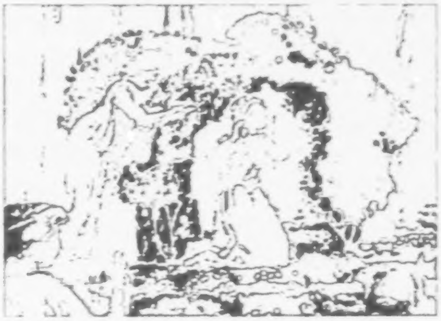
- The Greco-Roman story of Orpheus (ORR-fee-us) tells of the power of poetry and music to enchant all natural things.
- Orpheus and his mythology appealed to the SYMBOLIST ? artists who sought an ideal synthesis of music, poetry, and the visual arts.
- The colors, lines, and forms in Maurice (more-EES) Denis's (de-NEE) painting of *Orpheus and Eurydice* (yoo-ree-DEE-chay) convey a sense of rhythm and harmony.



ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE
1910
Maurice Denis
Oil on linen
The Putnam Dana McMillan Fund

STORY

Orpheus was the son of the god Apollo and Calliope (kuh-LIE-uh-pee), the muse of epic poetry. Orpheus became a great musician. His voice was more melodious than any other of his fellow-mortals. The songs he sang and the tunes he played on his lyre enchanted gods, mortals, and beasts alike; even stones and trees came to him when he played.



Detail of Eurydice kneeling from *Orpheus and Eurydice*

Orpheus married the beautiful nymph Eurydice. But on their wedding day a poisonous snake bit her and she died. Desperate to be reunited with his beloved, Orpheus journeyed to the Underworld to beg the king and queen there to return Eurydice to him. As he sang his plea and played his lyre, even the cold spirits of the Underworld wept. The king and queen granted the couple permission to leave together on the condition that Orpheus must not look back at Eurydice until they were both completely out of the Underworld. Silently they made the arduous, dark climb. But at the opening to the world, Orpheus, in his love for Eurydice, turned and looked at her. She slipped back into the darkness.

Orpheus returned to his world, wandered despondent through the woods and played music even more beautiful because it reflected his sadness. There are several versions of how Orpheus met his death, but all of them feature women so affected by his music that they fall upon him, tearing him from limb to limb, and fling his severed head into a river (or the sea). Orpheus's spirit returns to the Underworld, where he is happily reunited with Eurydice.

BACKGROUND

Orpheus

Although many well-known ancient writers wrote about Orpheus, his history is muddled. By the 5th century B.C., the Greeks considered Orpheus the founder of an early religion and a religious teacher. His mythology and fame as a singer derived from sacred texts ascribed to him.

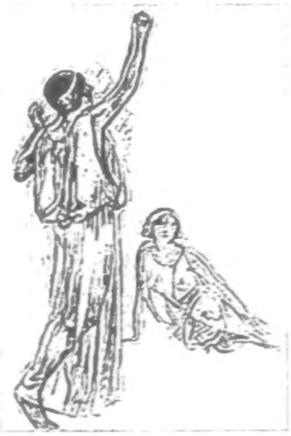
The Orpheus myth warns that death is inevitable, that even the power of song cannot save one from death. But it also reconciles life and death, suggesting that death is actually the beginning of a new life.

Since ancient times, Orpheus has represented the supreme power of poetry and music to enchant all natural things. It was Orpheus the musician who attracted the painter Maurice Denis. But, Orpheus's reputation as a religious and artistic teacher also endeared him to artists of this era who, like Denis, were interested in the spiritual qualities of art.

Maurice Denis and the Symbolists

Early in his career, Denis associated with a group of artists called Symbolists. The Symbolists challenged the value of naturalism as an artistic goal. Instead, they used bright and often arbitrary colors, curving lines, flat forms, and unusual compositions to transform the real world into personal symbolic statements.

The Symbolists sought an ideal synthesis of the arts. Maurice Denis believed, for example, that painting could have musical qualities and that color, line, and form could convey a sense of rhythm and harmony. Denis collaborated with writers, poets, composers, performers, and critics. Among his many interdisciplinary projects was a 1912-13 series of paintings on the history of music, including an image of Orpheus, in the Theatre des Champs-Elysees (tay-AH-truh day SHANZ-ay-leez-ay) in Paris.



Nymphs
Maurice Denis
about 1911
charcoal, white chalk
The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Orpheus and Eurydice

In the painting *Orpheus and Eurydice* Denis uses rich and pale greens, purples, browns, whites, and blues to evoke an idyllic moment of humans in harmony with nature. It is a beautiful spring day with a bright blue sky, fluffy white clouds, and a blanket of lush green and lavender flowers. No single figure dominates. Even Orpheus does not take center stage; rather, he stands to the right, playing his lyre and charming all who have gathered to hear him. He wears a laurel crown, a cherished prize in ancient Greece, awarded to the best poets and musicians.

Orpheus's white-clad audience, from the frontmost reclining woman to the embracing couple on the right, forms an open-ended circle around the musician. By gradually reducing the size of the figures, Denis guides the viewer back into the forest. Kneeling beneath an arched bower in the painting's MIDDLEGROUND, Eurydice raises her hands in approval of Orpheus's song. The sequence of figures creates a gentle rhythm that carries through the picture. Even the vertical trees curve gently, contributing to the overall harmony.

Denis's harmonious painting only hints at the tragedy that would befall the lovers. By isolating Eurydice under the hedge, he physically separates her from all of the other figures.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. **Review the story of Orpheus and Eurydice.**
   Where is Orpheus in this painting? MIDDLEGROUND, (?), just right of center.
   How do you know? He's playing a musical instrument called a lyre.
   Where is Eurydice in this painting? Middleground, left of center, kneeling under an arched hedge.
   How do you know? She is separated from others by a green arch.
   Does Denis give us any clues about what will happen to these lovers? The colors and mood of the picture do not seem to hint of the sad ending of the story. Perhaps Eurydice's position under green foliage while all other figures lounge on top of the green lawn suggests her Underworld fate?

2. What colors did Denis use in this painting? **Name them.** White, green, purple, brown, and blue.
   What do green, purple, and blue have in common? They all contain the color blue!
   Rather than use colors as they would appear in nature, Denis used colors as SYMBOLS (?) **to create a personal statement. What kind of feelings do you think Denis wanted to suggest with this picture? Loud? Quiet? Happy? Angry? Excited? Calm?**

3. **The** FOREGROUND (?) **in a painting is the space closest to the viewer, the** MIDDLEGROUND (?) **space below the horizon line, and the** BACKGROUND (?) **is very near the horizon line and/or above is the it.**
   What do you see in the foreground of this painting? Two reclining female figures.
   What do you see in the middleground? Green lawn, more figures.
   What do you see in the background? Figures and trees.
   What common elements unite the foreground, middleground, and background in this painting by appearing in all three places? Figures, curved lines, and color.

2. **Beginning with the two reclining women in the** FOREGROUND, (?) **follow with your eyes the ring of figures surrounding Orpheus.**
   Is there an open spot for you to join this group? Where? Right lower corner.

Think

1. **Maurice Denis was associated with a group of artists called the** SYMBOLISTS. (?) **The Symbolists sought an ideal synthesis of all the arts - visual arts, music, poetry, theater.**
   Why do you think Denis would be interested in the story of Orpheus and Eurydice? Orpheus represents the supreme power of music and poetry to enchant all natural things.

2. Denis believed that color, line, and form had musical qualities and could convey a sense of rhythm and harmony. He used these principles when he painted *Orpheus and Eurydice*. What kinds of music do you suppose inspired Denis when he made this painting? Jazz? Opera? Polka? Explain your answer. How would you represent your favorite music in an image?

3. Denis believed that a truly harmonious painting was one that achieved a balance between nature and the imagination. What would Denis's painting look like if he had believed that nature is more important than imagination? What would it look like if imagination had played a more important role?

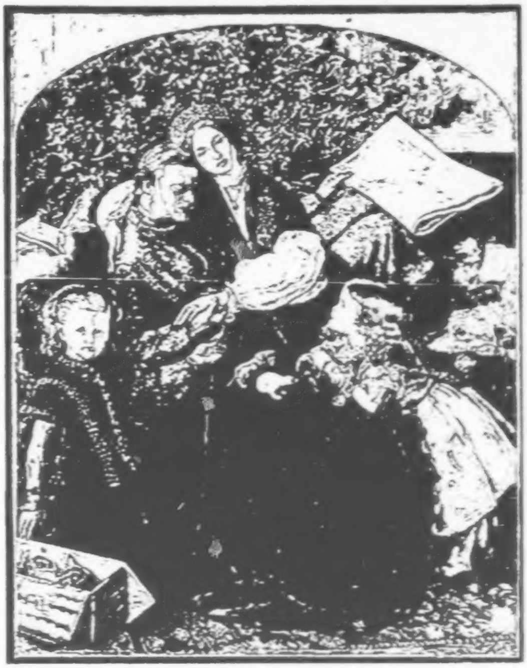
Peace Concluded

KEY IDEAS

- Millais depicts a fictional middle-class family in England learning of an important contemporary event, the end of the Crimean War.
- The subject is uncertain, but may be a symbolic commemoration of British military traditions in the Victorian era.
- This painting is an example of the Pre-Raphaelite style, which advocated a return to serious subjects and naturalistic representation, and emphasized accuracy of detail and color.

STORY

This is the portrait of a loving middle-class family in England in the mid-19th century. However, scholars do not agree on the meaning of this painting. According to the usual interpretation, the father, apparently a wounded officer, lies on a couch with a dog curled up at his feet. The newspaper he holds in his extended left hand dated March 31, 1856, which announces the end of the Crimean War, from which he has just returned. His wife, who is seated in front of him on the couch, gazes out at us; she encircles his shoulders with her right arm, while he holds her left hand in his own right hand. On her lap are four toy animals. A little girl leans on her lap and gazes up at her parents, possibly in conversation with her father. Another little girl, stands next to a box of toy animals, looks straight out at us, holding a toy dove in her uplifted left hand.



PEACE CONCLUDED
1910
Maurice Denis
Oil on linen
The Putnam Dana
McMilian Fund

BACKGROUND

Crimean War

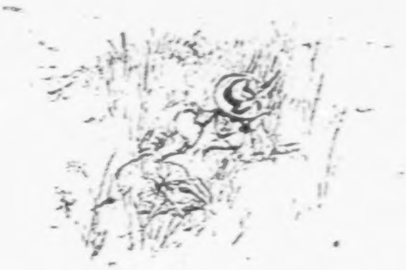
Many British soldiers died of wounds or disease in the senseless Crimean War (1854-56), the result of long-standing political and economic disputes between England, France, Turkey and Russia. Each of these countries wanted to control the prosperous trade in the Middle East and to gain possession of territories in the region. Russia was defeated by the alliance of the other three countries, and on March 18, 1856, after a long diplomatic struggle, a peace treaty was signed in Paris. Russia made significant military concessions, but in the end no country achieved its aims.[1]

England
Crimean War

In the eyes of the English public, the Crimean War was also noted for large numbers of military officers who were able to avoid field duty by pleading false domestic excuses. According to one interpretation of the story, Millais had originally intended to satirize these shirkers in his picture, which would have been titled: "Urgent Private Affairs". But when peace broke out and public sentiment shifted, he thought it prudent to alter the painting to make it convey a politically correct idea. Perhaps the composition would make more sense, however, if Millais had clearly portrayed it as a satire, by making it unmistakable that the gentleman resting comfortably at home was not a war invalid, and had never gone to the battle front. The viewer would have then interpreted him as a shirker who had left the honorable but dangerous task of defending his country to less privileged men. In that case the puzzling fact that the man shows no scars or bandages or any other evidence of illness would be satisfactorily explained.

Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

Very early in his career, Millais was one of the founding members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a group of British painters who opposed the sort of inflexible idealization of subjects and techniques endorsed by the powerful Royal Academy. Instead, their work emphasized the close observation of nature, and the depiction of contemporary events. Using bright colors on a white background, they were able to achieve convincing illusions of depth and brilliant, jewel-like qualities in colors. *Peace Concluded* is a strong example of the Pre-Raphaelite style.



Young Woman Reading on the Dunes
Sir John Everett Millais
19th century
Pencil and wash
The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Victorian Ideals

Scholars do not agree about the subject of this painting, and Millais himself never stated it. Although real people certainly posed for the composition, it is not the portrait of an actual family, but rather of a common family situation in contemporary England. Therefore the subject cannot be properly classified as a myth or a legend. Whether it was originally his intention or not, the artist has elevated this scene to the status of a heroic legend by skillfully incorporating symbolic details and implied conclusions. The family is deemed heroic because its members exemplify many values Victorian England held dear: love of country, devotion to duty, the sacrifices made by the family while the father was at war by first anxiously waiting at home and then coping with an invalid, fidelity between husband and wife, and optimism for the future.

Peace Concluded

Each member of the family tells us something about the meaning of the picture, by what they wear and by their actions.[2] The father wears a dressing gown, indicating that he is convalescing, possibly from a concealed wound. He has just read the news of the war's end in the London Times newspaper, evidently with mixed emotions. Previously he had been reading a popular contemporary novel by William Thackeray (now lying behind his pillow), The Newcomes, about an exceptionally virtuous military man.[3] The dog is an Irish wolfhound, an ancient British breed. Dogs usually symbolizes strength and fidelity to man, and also marital fidelity when portrayed together with a married couple.

On his wife's face there is a resigned, melancholy gaze.[4] Perhaps she is despondent about the gravity of her husband's condition. She wears an embroidered velvet gown and heavy gold jewelry, indicating that the family is well off and can afford such luxuries.[5]

The little girl on the right wears a delicate lace dress, and clutches a medal bearing Queen Victoria's profile that her father had obviously earned. This medal honored participants in any of the five major battles of the war. She has been playing with the toy animals on her mother's lap, which represent the four warring countries: Britain (lion), Russia (bear), the Ottoman Empire (turkey) and France (rooster). These animals belong to a toy Noah's Ark set, then commonly found in English households. (The rest of the animals are in the box on the floor).

The other little girl holds a toy dove carrying an olive branch in its beak, symbolizing peace, but may also refer to the dove's role in the biblical story of Noah, when it returns to the Ark with proof of land. This child, too, wears a richly decorated velvet dress. The turkey carpet on the floor is another sign of the family's wealth and comfort.

Behind the group is a large, spreading myrtle bush. Since it is an evergreen, myrtle symbolizes eternal love, in particular conjugal fidelity. The battle picture on the wall represents an engraving, by James Heath, of a renowned painting by John Singleton Copley, the Death of Major Pearson. As a young commander, Major Pierson led his troops to victory by repelling a French invasion, but lost his life in the conflict.

Millais painted with oil paint on canvas, using very flat, thinly layered brushstrokes to create a smooth surface. The painting has been varnished, which not only protects the surface but also increases the brilliance of the colors.

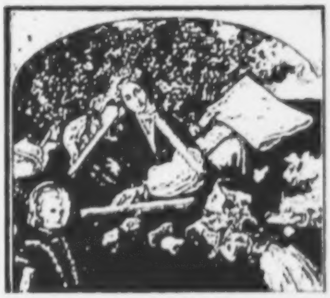
[1] It was during this war that Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, became famous for her dedication to her patients, many of whom died due to the infectious diseases they caught in unsanitary hospitals. She successfully pioneered the reform of hospital sanitation systems, reorganized the British military health care system, and instituted professional training for nurses.

[2] The following details are described and analyzed by Michael Hancher, "'Urgent Private Affairs': Millais's *Peace Concluded, 1856*", in *The Burlington Magazine* (August, 1991) CXXXIII, n.1061, 499-506.

[3] Colonel Robert Malcolm, a friend who shared Millais's interest in some sketches of the Crimean War, modeled for the officer.

[4] The model was Millais's own wife, Effie.

[5] The models for the children have not been identified.



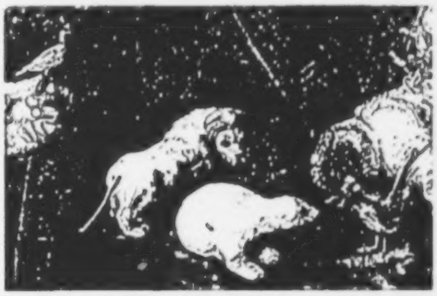
The implied triangle connecting the mother and her daughters indicates the area where all the activity essential to the message of the painting takes place.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. Think of the phrase "the family circle." The composition of this painting is based on shapes and lines that encircle, or embrace. Some of the lines are IMPLIED, making your eye complete a circle through direction or contrast.
   Can you describe some circles? The mother's braids, her arms around her husband, the dog around his feet, the mother's lap as a backdrop for the toy animals.

2. Millais used toy animals to represent the countries involved in the Crimean War.
   Can you match the animals with their countries? Lion is a symbol for Britain, the polar bear is Russia, the



Detail of toy animals from *Peace Concluded*

cockerel represents France and the Turkey is an obvious reference to Turkey!

3. **There are many other symbols in this painting that help to tell its story.**
   See if you can find them. A dog represents faithfulness; there is a medal awarded to those who fought in the battles of the Crimean War; a dove symbolizes peace; a myrtle bush symbolizes eternal love; a painting about a battle; and a book titled *The Newcomes*, a story about a brave military hero.

Think

1. **The clothing people wear in paintings, and the furnishings surrounding them are usually chosen to make a statement about the subject of the painting.**
   What can we conclude about the status of this family from their clothing? luxury fabrics of velvet and sheer silk with embroidery and ribbons
   Their furnishings? they own a painting, a sofa with a carved frame, and a Turkish carpet
   The number of exquisite toy animals in the daughter's toy box?

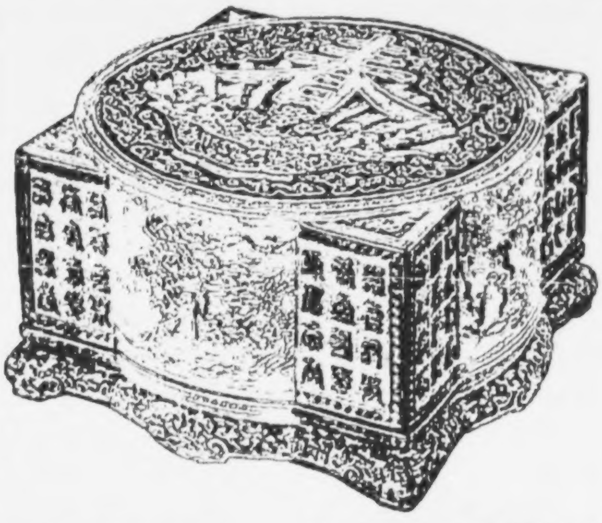
2. **There are two interpretations of this painting, one in which the father who has been wounded is home from the war and recuperating surrounded by his loving family, and the other in which the father has shirked his duties to fight for his country by claiming obligations at home, leaving other less powerful and wealthy men to do the fighting for him. Which interpretation do you think is correct? What do you see that makes you say that?**

3. **Millais wanted the family members in his painting to serve as examples for the values of Victorian England.**
   What role do you think Millais valued for a Victorian wife? The spiritual center of the family. In many ways the mother here recalls a Madonna in a medieval altarpiece.
   What role do you think children played in Victorian England? Adoring, obedient, accepting of the father's absolute authority.
   How might these ideas about the role of children be applied to the state government? Can you think of other examples of art that features private citizens, but makes a statement about government?

Presentation Box

KEY IDEAS

- According to Chinese legend, giant peaches grew in the Land of the Immortals. Peaches were, therefore, associated with good health, marriage, and long life.
- During the Ch'ing (ching) dynasty, luxury objects were often decorated with SYMBOLS (?) and stories referring to prosperity and good fortune.
- The artist varied the colors and TEXTURES (?) of the layers of LACQUER (?) on this box to indicate depth.



PRESENTATION BOX
1736-95 (Ch'ing dynasty
Tricolor lacquer
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Augustus L. Searle

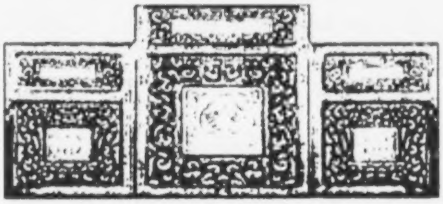
STORY

Long, long ago a woman named Hsi Wang-mu (she wong-moo) ruled over the Land of the Immortals in the Kunlun (cun-lun) mountains. Her incredible mountain residence was renowned for its marble and jasper buildings, nine-storied tower, sparkling brooks, and especially for its beautiful gardens. In the Land of the Immortals, bountiful peach trees grew. One of the peach trees in Hsi Wang-mu's orchard blossomed only once every 3,000 years. Its luscious fruit took an additional 3,000 years to ripen. Anyone lucky enough to eat the magical fruit of this tree was granted immortality. When the peaches were harvested, Hsi Wang-mu held a huge celebration and feast at her home, at which her mortal visitors ate the precious peaches. She also invited the immortals to taste the fruit, since they, too, had to wait 6,000 years to enjoy this amazing delicacy.

BACKGROUND

Ch'ien Lung

The Ch'ing dynasty emperor Ch'ien Lung (CHEE-en lung), who reigned from 1736 to 1795, was a devoted art collector and patron. He encouraged artists to produce many luxury objects, including fine lacquer presentation boxes, made as gifts for members of the court.



Detail from a Chinese lacquer throne

Artist unknown
Imperial Throne
Early 18th century
Softwood and polycromed lacquer

Lacquer

Asian lacquer comes from the sap of the lac tree. It is a thick, sticky substance rather like honey. Artists apply many thin layers of lacquer on wood objects, allowing each layer to harden for weeks before adding another. By applying layers in different colors, artists could carve down through the layers to reveal various colors. Because of the time and intensive labor required to produce carved lacquerware objects, they were very expensive luxury items. But the fashion for lacquerware during the 18th century caused a high demand all over China. While this box was probably produced in the imperial workshops in Beijing, there were also imperially supervised workshops in cities in the western and southern provinces.

Symbols

Artists often decorated luxury objects with images and with symbols of prosperity and good fortune. Rather than tell stories literally (that would be too obvious), the Chinese used familiar symbols and images that recalled the story.

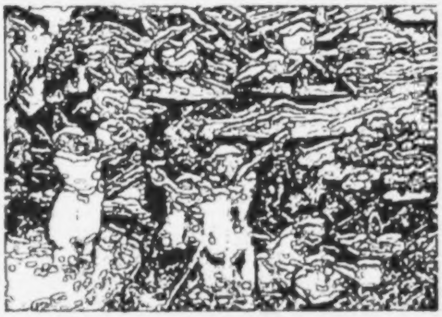
Besides evoking stories, symbols can reveal the intentions and views of Heaven. Such symbols often appeared in everyday contexts. A series of earthquakes meant that Heaven was displeased; an early blossoming or the appearance of a crane might herald the coming of good fortune. By using symbols such as the peach, artists recorded a general wish for other heavenly signs of impending happiness and long life.

Peaches

Peaches suggest many things in traditional Chinese culture. They were considered good medicine for everything from rheumatism to coughs. Children wore peach stones carved in the shapes of locks around their necks to keep them from harm. The peach is commonly associated with springtime, marriage, fertility, and long life.

Presentation Box

The superb craftsmanship, intricate composition, and elaborate detail of this *presentation box* are common features of the fine lacquerware produced during the reign of emperor Ch'ien Lung. It was probably made as a gift for a member of the nobility or even for the emperor.



Detail of Peach scene from the *Presentation Box*

Symbols

This presentation box is covered with many symbols that wish its recipient good luck and happiness. On top is a large character meaning "spring," which was considered one of the most fruitful and pleasant seasons. The peach was another symbol for springtime. Below that is an elegant bowl filled with symbols of wealth - coins and rhinoceros horns. Illustrated on the sides are legends concerning immortality. The combination of signs of spring, wealth, children, and long life suggests that this presentation box was made as a wedding gift or a birthday present.

Description

The front of the box shows the legend of Hsi Wang-mu's giant peach trees in the Land of the Immortals. The land is a beautiful paradise of lofty mountains, cool wavy seas, and lush vegetation. On the left, a peach tree grows out of the side of a cliff; the immense peaches dwarf the tree itself. Luckily for the immortals, the branches hang low enough that the peaches can be picked.

Two young boys and a wrinkled old man pick the luscious fruit. The old man is the god of longevity. His staff bears the character shou (show), meaning "long life." Standing on a ledge, one boy picks the peaches and hands them to the god of longevity, who cradles them in a long cloth. Behind the old man, the other child picks off the leaves and places the peaches in a basket.

Although the scene looks natural, it is carefully and decoratively composed. The figures stand on ground that is made up of a PATTERN (?) of squares and small flowers. The waves are reduced to a repetitive weave of diagonal lines.

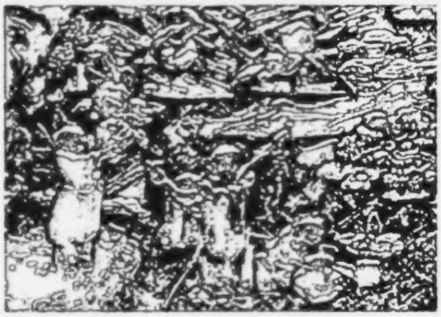
The artist, in a typical Chinese fashion, has created a sense of depth by tilting up the ground plane, so that more distant forms are set higher in the composition. The stream winds upward into the distance. PERSPECTIVE (?) shifts within the scene so that one can simultaneously look up at the mountains and down on the heads of the figures.

The artist also used color and texture to distinguish between FOREGROUND (?) and BACKGROUND (?) forms. The black areas, deeply carved, form the water and the sky. Closer, the landscape forms a red backdrop for the figures and peaches, which, though also red, are carved from an even shallower layer of lacquer.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. This *presentation box* is covered with many SYMBOLS (?) that wish the box's owner good luck and happiness. Find the Chinese character on the cover of the box. The character means "spring," a fruitful and pleasant season. Find the bowl below the character. The bowl is filled with symbols of wealth.
   What are they? Coins and rhinoceros horns.



Detail of Peach scene from the *Presentation Box*

2. Tell the story of Hsi Wang-mu and the peach tree.
   What parts of the story do you see in this panel on the *presentation box*? Gardens of Hsi Wang-mu, peach tree on the left.
   Who is picking the peaches? A boy.
   Who is helping? An old man and another boy.
   Do you see Hsi Wang-mu in this panel? No.

3. The artist who carved this box applied many layers of different colors of LACQUER (?) on the wood box. After they dried he was able to carve through the layers to reveal the various colors.
   How many different colors did he use when he painted the box with lacquer? Two - black and red.
   What color did he paint on first? Black.
   How can you tell? Black is the bottom layer.
   FOREGROUND (?) in a work of art is the area closest to the viewer. BACKGROUND (?) is the area farthest away from the viewer.
   How did the artist use color to distinguish between foreground and background in this carving? Black makes up the background - the black areas are farthest away. Red makes up the foreground - red landscape and figures are closer to the viewer, literally on top of the black background.

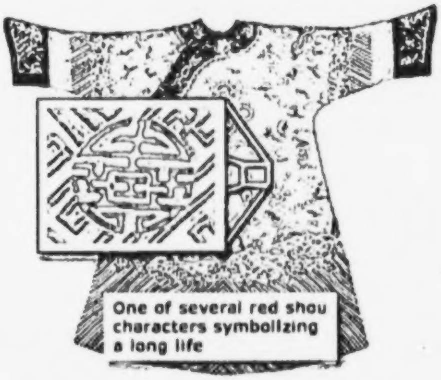
4. Where do you see PATTERN (?) in the picture of the Land of the Immortals? Black water and sky. Red ground that the figures stand on, and leaves on trees to the right.
   Where else do you see pattern on the box? Black and red border on outside edges, orange background on either side of the picture of the Land of the Immortals.
   What kinds of tools would the artist need to carve these patterns? Small sharp blades, such as razor blades or X-Acto knives, to achieve tiny details.

Think

1. **This box is called a *Presentation Box* because it was presented as a gift, probably to a member of the Chinese nobility. The owner was free to put whatever he or she liked in the box. If you received a box like this as a gift, what would you put in it?**

2. **The old man in the scene from Hsi Wang-mu's gardens carries a staff that bears the character shou, for long life, and identifies him as the god of longevity.**
   Why might the god of longevity be in the gardens with the magic peach tree? Whoever ate the fruit of the magic peach tree would live forever.
   Other symbols that cover this presentation box stand for spring, wealth, and children.
   On what occasion would it have been appropriate to give this box as a gift? Although we can't know for sure, the symbols suggest that it may have been a wedding or birthday gift.

3. **Peaches suggest many things in Chinese culture, among them springtime, marriage, fertility, and long life. By depicting** SYMBOLS (?) **such as a peach, the artist recorded a wish for the recipient of the gift to have happiness and a long life.**
   Can you think of a fruit that we typically associate with good health? Apple.
   Have you heard a proverb about the benefits of the apple? An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
   On the Dragon Robe for an empress, there was another, different symbol for long life.
   Can you remember what it was? The red shou character.


One of several red shou characters symbolizing a long life

Dragon Robe for an Empress of China
1821-50 (Ch'ing dynasty)
Embroidered silk, gold thread
The John R. Van Derlip Fund

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

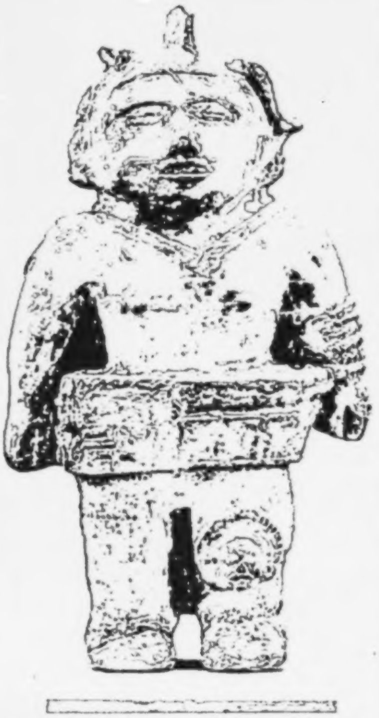
Rattle in the Form of a Ball Player

KEY IDEAS

- According to the Mayan creation story, the emergence of the Sun and the Moon was the result of a ball game between the Lords of the Underworld and the Hero Twins on earth, who won the game and later rose into the heavens.
- Periodic reenactments of the ball game were important religious rituals for the Mayan people, who believed that human blood was an essential sacrifice to appease the gods, and thus guarantee that the life-sustaining cycles of the sun and of renewal in nature would continue uninterrupted.
- This small figurine wears the typical equipment of a ball player: a carved hip bumper, an arm pad and knee pads, and on his head is a mount for a headdress (now missing).

STORY

The Popol Vuh, the 16th century sacred book of the Maya, contains the story of the Hero Twins on earth, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, who were disturbing the Lords of the Underworld with their incessant bouncing of their heavy rubber ball. The Lords decided to entice the Twins below to Xibalba (the Underworld), hoping to do away with them. So they challenged the Twins to a game, and persuaded them to use the ball the Lords provided. After the ball was put into play, a dagger emerged from it to slaughter the Hero Twins. But through a series of clever tricks of their own, the Twins managed to emerge victorious from the Underworld, and eventually became the Sun and the Moon.[1]



RATTLE IN THE FORM OF A BALL PLAYER
6th-9th century
Ceramic
The John R. Van Derlip Fund

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[1] A complete description of the ball game and several objects in The Minneapolis Institute of Arts' collection related to it can be found in: Phyllis Mauch Messenger, "A Day at the Ball Game," Arts (January: 1989), 16-18. See also: Allen Wardwell, "A Mayan Ball Game Relief," *Museum Studies 2* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1967), 62-73.

BACKGROUND

The Maya were a Central American people whose civilization flourished in parts of what are now Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador from 300 B.C. to the 16th century A.D. The Spaniards who arrived in the early 16th century destroyed much of Mayan elite culture during the Conquest, such as their hieroglyphic writing system, but other aspects, including their language and some folk customs, have survived to the present. The culture centered around the city of Veracruz (on the Gulf of Mexico) was within the sphere of Mayan influence but it developed a distinctive artistic style. From the Classic Veracruz period, the art and architecture of Veracruz was made up of contributions from the Huastec and Olmec peoples, and possibly contributions of the Totonac inhabitants who arrived somewhat later. Architecturally, the most important city of the Veracruz region is El Tajin, where eleven ball courts have been located.[1]

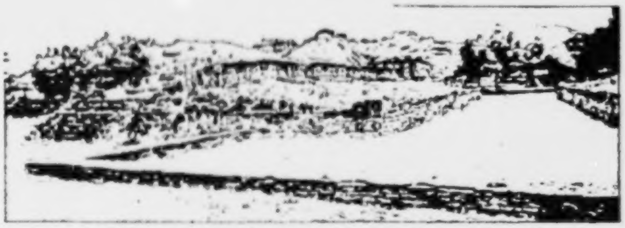


Photo of El Tajin by Dawn A. Smith

This description of a mythical ball game found in the Popol Vuh is corroborated by images found on bas-reliefs, figurines and paintings throughout Mesoamerica, where paved ball courts have been found in every region of this ancient civilization. Most ball players are similarly dressed: thick bands, or bumpers, surround the figure below the waist, and from it protrude protective or ornamental items called palmas and hachas; gloves and knee pads; and a train of feathers fixed to the back of the bumper. Eye-witness accounts written after the Spanish Conquest confirm common features of the game: the use of hands and feet was not permitted; the ball was deflected with the hips, knees, or torso. The balls were solid and heavy, weighing about five pounds and made of latex, a rubbery substance gathered from trees or bushes. The object was to strike the ball in such a way that the opponent was unable to return it, or to hit stone markers on the walls.

During the Classic Mayan period (A.D. ca. 400-800) the ball game was often played as a ritual contest ending in human sacrifice. In depictions on bas reliefs at two important sites, El Tajin and Chichen Itza, the victors are shown decapitating the losers to spill blood for the gods. Just as each morning once again brought the sun back up from its perilous night journey through the Underworld, the conflict between life and death was played out in the ball game. For the Maya, blood sacrifice was necessary for the survival of both gods and people, sending human energy skyward and receiving divine power in return. Through the sacrifice of players, human blood was supplied regularly to nourish the gods. In addition, by ritualizing and closely controlling this recurring obligation, the priests and rulers may have avoided the need to engage in actual warfare to sustain their world order.

Rattle in the Form of a Ball Player

This clay rattle was taken from Nopiloa, where many figurines have been discovered in burial sites. It is made of pinkish-white clay, and there is a hole in the right shoulder from which the rattle could be suspended. It wears the protective bumper necessary to play the game. Many Veracruz Classic period stone bumpers of the type the figurine wears have been found at many sites. These intricately carved stone bumpers are replicas of the protective bumpers made of wood and fiber that the players wore to absorb and deflect the impact of the heavy ball.

Surviving bumpers are ceremonial and were carved from single blocks of very hard stone, and decorated with complex geometric images of animals and humans. Small, blade-like stone pieces, called hacha, were attached to the bumpers and may have served as team identifiers or markers on the ball court. Later they may have been replaced by the more functional palma, a tall, crescent-shaped piece which provided some chest protection. When wearing such a bumper, a player stood poised between life and death, his fate determined by the game and the cosmic forces he represents.

[1] Mary Ann Miller, The Art of Mesoamerica from Olmec to Aztec (London, Thames and Hudson, 1996), 92-94.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. What is this figure wearing? Knee and elbow pads, with a hip bumper.
   What is purpose did this costume serve? Protect the player from the heavy, hard ball.
   Is there any decoration on the player's equipment? Evidence of patterns on the bumper and underneath. There is a face on the knee pad and the elbow pad is striped. Head shows some evidence of decoration.

2. NATURALISTIC (?) **sculpture is made to look exactly as the subject would appear in nature, as it was seen in real life. In** ABSTRACT (?) **sculpture details are simplified to stress overall shape or patterns.**
   What details have been simplified in this ABSTRACT (?) sculpture? Facial features, especially eyes, muscular details of the figure - the forms of arms and legs appear as cylinders. Hands and feet have no fingers or toes delineated.

Think

1. **The ballgame played by Mayans was the first team sport we know of.**
   What is the difference between team sports and sports that individuals play? Success in team sports depends on each member working together in order to advance the team.
   Why do you think team sports continue to be popular? Do you play on a team?

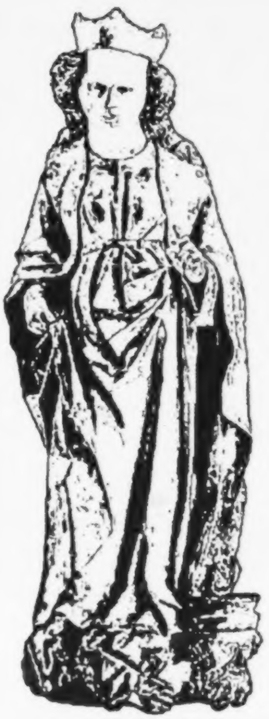
2. **Compare this rattle to the** Raven Rattle**. Both of these works of art are rattles, but their overall** STYLES (?) **or design qualities are different.**
   Name the differences between the two rattles. **Consider: materials, culture of the artists, treatment of human figures and features of** STYLE. (?) The Veracruz rattle is made of clay and the Raven rattle is made of wood. Both of these artists are from North America, one from the Southwest and one from Northwest. While both rattles have human figures as part of their design, the Raven Rattle's dominant feature is a bird. The Raven Rattle shows traces of color while the Veracruz rattle does not.
   Do you think these rattles were used for the same purpose? Why or why not?

3. **One theory regarding the purpose of ballgames in Mayan culture is that actual warfare may have been unnecessary to sustain the Mayan world order because conflicts and sacrifice were worked out in the ballgame. Would this strategy work for us today? Why or why not?**

Saint Catherine of Alexandria

KEY IDEAS

- The Christian LEGEND (?) of the martyr Saint Catherine of Alexandria demonstrated the virtue of defending one's beliefs.
- Saint Catherine's dedication to her faith, even in the face of great danger, made her a SYMBOL (?) of Christianity's triumph over paganism. She was one of the most popular Christian heroes.
- The stocky figure and angular drapery of this Austrian sculpture are typical of the late Gothic "hard style."



SAINT CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA
1450-60
Painted and gilded linden wood
Gift of Ethel Morrison Van Derlip in memory of her mother, Julia Kellogg Morrison

STORY

The Story that Developed Over Hundreds of Years

Catherine of Alexandria was the niece of a Roman emperor and an Egyptian queen. At her birth a halo of light danced around her head. An exceptionally smart youngster, she studied with seven great scholars. Catherine soon surpassed all others in nobility, beauty, wealth, and knowledge. Her father died when she was only 14, leaving her in charge of the kingdom. Catherine declined, giving up the kingdom in order to pursue her studies. When her loyal subjects begged her to reconsider and to marry, Catherine agreed, but insisted that she would only marry a man who was her social and financial equal. Furthermore, he must be so beautiful that angels would wish to see him, and kind enough to forgive all offenses. Her subjects feared that no one man could fulfill all of these criteria.

At this time a religious hermit saw in a vision that the Christian messiah, Jesus, was the husband Catherine sought. The hermit shared this divine message with Catherine and gave her a picture of the baby Jesus with his mother, the Virgin Mary. Upon seeing the child's face, Catherine knew she could love no one else.

When Catherine asked the hermit how she could become worthy of Jesus, he instructed her in the tenets of Christianity and baptized her. That night she had a dream in which the baby Jesus placed a wedding ring on her finger. When she awoke she found that the ring was still there. From that moment on Catherine considered herself the bride of Jesus.

In the meantime, the Roman emperor Maxentius (mak-SEN-chus) had come to Alexandria. Maxentius persecuted all those who refused to worship the idols that he worshipped. Catherine challenged Maxentius. He called in 50 of his greatest advisors to dispute with her, but they were no match for her wisdom and power of argument. She converted them to Christianity. The cruel Maxentius ordered his advisors burned to death, but he was so enchanted by Catherine's beauty that he spared her life.

Although he was already married he tried to force Catherine to marry him. When she refused he tried to starve her into submission. Angels came to her dungeon cell and fed her. When Maxentius's wife begged him to have mercy on Catherine, he had his wife put to death and again tried to force Catherine into marriage.

Furious at her repeated refusals, Maxentius ordered Catherine tied to four spinning spiked wheels that would tear her apart. A great flame flashed down from the heavens and burned the wheels, and their hot fragments killed Catherine's executioners. Finally Maxentius had Catherine beheaded. Angels carried her body to the top of Mount Sinai. Maxentius soon died a horrible death.

BACKGROUND

The details of the legend illustrate how fragments of historical fact became distorted and were combined over hundreds of years, when most people learned stories by hearing them, not by reading them. Catherine, if she existed, may have been the daughter of a nobleman but not of a king, since Alexandria was under Roman rule in 300 A.D. Although Maxentius was indeed the current Roman emperor (reigned 306-312 A.D.) with authority over the African provinces, he followed a policy of tolerance towards Christians. There is no record that he put his wife to death. His army was defeated by the forces of the future emperor Constantine at the battle of Milvan bridge (28 October 312) and along with thousands of his troops Maxentius drowned in the Tiber River.

Hypatia

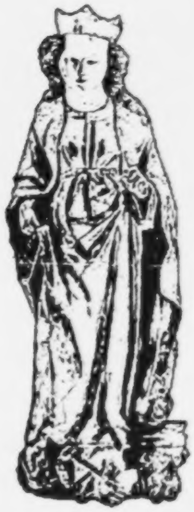
Many elements of the Saint Catherine legend are similar to those of the life of an ancient philosopher named Hypatia (high-PAY-shuh). Around 300 AD, Alexandria, Egypt, was the Western world's intellectual, scientific, and philosophic center. It was also the site of tremendous turmoil as Christianity gained political and intellectual power. Although Hypatia taught so-called pagan philosophies in Alexandria, she was given special treatment by Christian leaders in the city. She died in 415, evidently murdered by a group of fanatical monks.

Saint Catherine

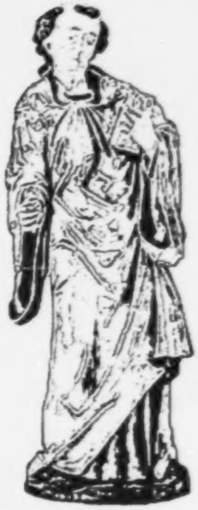
Whatever her origins, Saint Catherine of Alexandria was one of the most popular Christian saints in Europe during the later Middle Ages. Jacobus de Voragine (ja-KOH-bus duh ve-RAJ-i-nee) popularized the story of her martyrdom in his well-known collection of saints' lives, called The Golden Legend. She was the patron saint of young girls, students, clergy, philosophers, and craftspeople, such as wheelwrights, spinners, and millers, whose work centered on the wheel. Perhaps because of her association with Hypatia, the Catholic Church considered Catherine's history unreliable and removed her from its calendar of saints in 1969.

Sculpture

During the 14th century, artists regularly included Saint Catherine in large-scale altarpieces. Rows of standing saints typically flanked a central figure of Christ or the Virgin Mary. These sculptures were used to educate the illiterate about Christian theology and to inspire devotion.



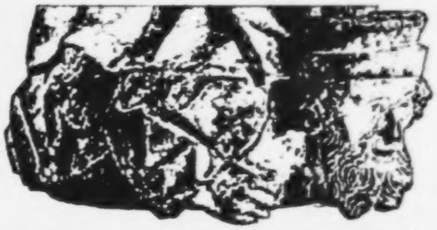
Side-by-side comparison



Another example of a linden wood scuplture

Follower of Hans Klocker
Saint Leonard
1495 - 1510
Polychromed and gilt wood
The John R. Van Derlip Fund

Altarpiece saints were often carved from linden wood, also known as limewood, which grew in the dense forests of southern Germany and Austria. Sculptors prized the expensive linden wood because its uniform grain enabled them to carve out complex drapery patterns without cracking the wood. People believed that linden wood had magical qualities, and its leaves, seeds, and flowers were used in medicines. Images were thought to be more powerful when carved from this magical wood.



Detail of Maxentius from the base of *Saint Catherine of Alexandria*'s feet

Saint Catherine of Alexandria

This 15th-century linden wood sculpture from Austria probably stood in a large elevated altarpiece. For this reason, Catherine is looking down at the viewer. The back of the sculpture is hollowed out, indicating that only the front was meant to be seen. Catherine is depicted as a graceful young woman. She stands tall on the back of a small prone figure of Maxentius, showing the triumph of faith over evil. Her crown indicates her royal status. Uncharacteristically, she is not accompanied by her customary ATTRIBUTES, ? especially a spiked wheel, a martyr's palm, and a wedding ring.

Catherine is represented not as a 4th century Egyptian woman, but as an aristocratic woman living in 15th century Austria. Catherine, renowned for her beauty, has long, wavy hair. Her stocky body and her idealized facial features - small delicate red mouth, small sharp chin, long narrow nose, broad cheeks, and high forehead - are typical of Austrian and German Gothic representations of female saints. Traces of paint indicate that her face was painted creamy white. She wears a fashionable 15th-century ensemble of a high-waisted gown, loose outer cloak, and pointed shoes. Traces of color show that her cloak was once GILDED (?) and the lining was painted blue. The red patches are remnants of the glue used to attach the GOLD LEAF. (?)

Catherine delicately lifts the hem of her cape as she steps over Maxentius. The folds of her voluminous drapery are crinkled and brittle. Because of these sharp, angular folds, the late Gothic manner in which she is carved is called the "hard style."

Detail of folds from *Saint Catherine of Alexandria*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. Review the story of Saint Catherine. The artist who made this sculpture used SYMBOLS (?) to tell viewers about Catherine's life.
   What does Catherine's crown symbolize? Royalty.
   Can you find a symbol of the evil she overcame? Maxentius
   How has the artist emphasized Catherine's victory? Catherine stands on the figure of Maxentius, a symbol of her triumph over evil.

2. Where do you see smooth curved lines in this sculpture? Catherine's face, hair, and hands.
   Where do you see straight angular lines? Catherine's clothing, the figure of Maxentius.
   The artist used these two kinds of lines to create contrast in the sculpture.
   What effect does this contrast have? Catherine's face stands out because its smooth lines contrast the angular lines of her clothing.

3. The late Gothic manner in which this sculpture is carved is called the "hard style."
   What is hard or sharp about it? The sharp, angular folds of Catherine's clothing.

4. This sculpture functioned as part of an altarpiece, made to educate the illiterate and to inspire devotion. Knowing this, how big do you think it is? Explain. In order for people to see this on an altar, it would have to be large. Find an object or person of similar size-63 inches.
   How might the way it was used have influenced its size? Such statues had to be quite large to be seen by the worshippers.

Think

1. Catherine of Alexandria was renowned for her beauty. Do you think the woman represented in this sculpture is beautiful? Why or why not? What is considered beautiful changes over time and is different for each person. Saint Catherine's facial features are typical of German and Austrian Gothic standards of beauty. If you were to carve a sculpture of a beautiful person, would it look different than Saint Catherine? Would any of the features be like Saint Catherine's?

2. Although it is not apparent in the image, the sculptor who carved Saint Catherine hollowed out the sculpture from the back and left the back open and unfinished.

Why? This sculpture was not meant to be viewed from all sides, but rather set against a wall on an altar; the viewer wouldn't see the back. Also, a hollow sculpture is lighter in weight, easier to move, and less likely to crack.

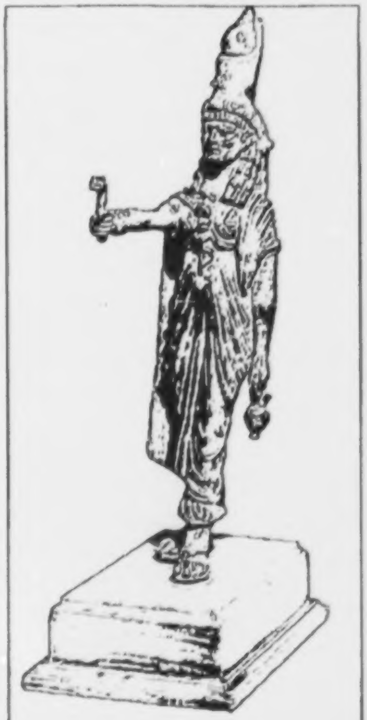
3. **Even though the story of Catherine tells us she died at the hands of Maxentius, Europeans during the Middle Ages considered her triumphant.**
   Why? Catherine represented the virtue of defending one's beliefs, even in the face of death. Her reward for her bravery, according to Christian mythology, was a place in the kingdom of heaven.

4. **The story and sculpture of Saint Catherine tell us about the triumph of good over evil.**
   What other stories can you think of about good overcoming evil? Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, 101 Dalmatians, the Little Mermaid.
   Explore the other works of art in the World Mythology set of images.
   Which other myths feature the triumph of good over evil? Memorial tusk, Theseus, Medusa, Mary Magdalene.

Statuette of Isis

KEY IDEAS

- Isis (EYE-sus) figures prominently in Egyptian mythology as a healer, a magician, and an exemplary wife and mother.
- During the age of the Roman Empire, the cult of Isis gained immense popularity not only in Egypt but also throughout the Mediterranean world.
- While the subject and pose of this *statuette of Isis* are Egyptian, the NATURALISTIC ? treatment of its form is characteristically Roman.



STATUETTE OF ISIS
1st century A.D.
Bronze
Gift of The Morse Foundation

STORY

Egyptian sun god, Ra pronounced (Rah), created virtually everything that existed in the world. Simply by speaking the name of something, Ra created it. As he named birds, animals, and things, they appeared. Because Ra made all things, he also controlled them. More powerful than anyone, he ruled both heaven and earth.

Isis, a clever god gifted in the arts of magic, envied Ra's power. She desired to know Ra's secret Great Name, because it was the key to his magic and would give her greater power. Isis spent a lot of time wondering how she could obtain Ra's secret. As Ra grew older and weaker, she devised a plot.

Whenever Ra drooled, the wily Isis gathered up his spit. Kneading the spit with soil, she created a serpent. Although the serpent came forth from Ra, he had not created it, so it was outside of his control. Isis molded the serpent into the form of a dart and placed it on Ra's daily walking path across the sky. When Ra passed by, the serpent reared up and stung him.

Soon, Ra began to burn with the serpent's venom. He was baffled by the creature's behavior and dismayed to discover that he had no power over it. He could not cure his body of the terrible pain. Ra called to his children for help, but they could not end his suffering.

Then Isis came forth and offered to work her magic to end Ra's pain. However, she insisted she could cure Ra only if he revealed his secret Great Name. Ra offered a variety of nicknames, but clever Isis was not fooled. Fearing for his life, Ra finally gave in and transmitted the Great Name from his heart to Isis's. That is how Isis successfully learned the secret of Ra's all-powerful magic.

BACKGROUND

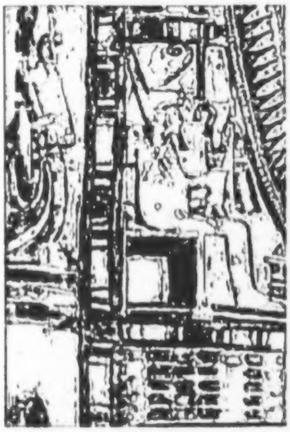
Isis

According to a rich mythology surrounding the Egyptian goddess, Isis raised her husband, Osiris (oh-

SIGH-rus), from the dead, protected her son, Horus (HOR-us), from a variety of certain deaths, and knew the secrets of immortality. She was faithful, intelligent, strong, and beautiful. Like Osiris, Isis was associated with vegetation and the cycles of the seasons and the Nile River. Ancient beliefs attributed the annual rainfall, which sustained the people of the Nile Valley, to the tears Isis shed for Osiris. (Learn more about Osiris in the Mummy Case of Lady Teshat)

Romans in Egypt

Egypt, which had been under Greek rule for three centuries, was conquered by Rome in 30 B.C., and remained part of the Roman Empire until 368 A.D. The Romans ruthlessly exacted money and resources from Egypt. The Roman rulers thrived at great expense to the conquered Egyptians. Various factions of the Egyptian population mounted revolts against Roman rule, but these were all suppressed. However, the Romans did not impose their official gods on the Egyptians, allowing the native religion to survive in a diluted form during the centuries of Roman domination. People in Egypt and throughout the Mediterranean world sought hope and comfort through the worship of the traditional Egyptian gods whose mythology embraced a central belief in life after death—Osiris, Isis, and their son, Horus.



Detail of Osiris from the Mummy Case of Lady Teshat

Figures

In Egypt, people regularly left small bronze figures of deities at temples or funereal sites in order to attract the deity represented. By offering a sculpture at a temple, one could pay homage to a god and hope to gain his or her favor and protection.

Statuette of Isis

This *statuette of Isis* dates to the 1st century A.D., when Rome ruled over Egypt; the artistic traditions of both cultures are evident in its design. Traditional ATTRIBUTES ? identify Isis—her crown, serpent, AMULET, ? and jug. Her stiff stance is characteristically Egyptian. The sculpture's naturalism, however, is characteristic of Roman Imperial art; Isis's large eyes, broad upper lip, and rounded cheeks all give her face a portrait quality. Much of her gown is close-fitting, revealing the solidly rounded form of her body underneath. Her gown falls loosely over her legs in graceful and realistically fluid folds.

Several aspects of the sculpture are symbolic ATTRIBUTES ? of Isis's identity and power. In her left hand Isis holds her magical dart-shaped serpent, a reference to the power gained from her knowledge of Ra's secret name. In her right hand is a jug, presumably of sacred water, associated with the power of magicians. Over a fabulous wig of cascading curls, Isis wears the combined crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, indicating her dominion over both. At the base of her crown a vulture wraps its wings around her head, symbolizing her protective powers. At her bust is a Tyt (tit) amulet, also known as an Isis-knot, a fertility SYMBOL ? and a reference to her life-giving powers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

1. This figure of Isis is shown holding an important feature from the story of Isis.

Detail of Serpent from the *Statuette of Isis*

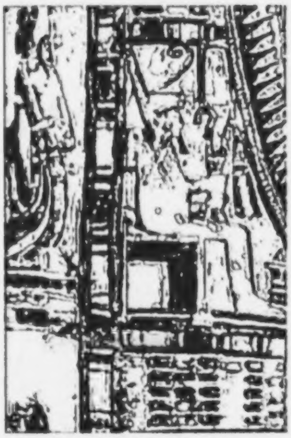
What is it? The serpent.
Does the serpent look different from other snakes you have seen? How? Straight and stiff rather than curved and writhing.
What part of Isis's story was the artist recalling when he made the serpent look straight and stiff? Isis molded the serpent into the form of a dart.

2. **Egyptian people left bronze figures like this one at temples or funeral sites to attract the deity the sculpture represented. How big do you think it is? Find an object similar in size-nine inches high.**
How might the way it was used have influenced its size? Such statuettes had to be small to be portable.
What clues to size does the title give you? "Statuette" has diminutive suffix.

3. **Isis was a very important figure in Egyptian mythology. She was known to the Egyptian people as a healer, magician, and exemplary wife and mother.**
What details of this sculpture show us that Isis is an important person? Crown or tall hat identifies rulers, deities, and/or important members of a community in many cultures.

4. **An** ATTRIBUTE (?) **is a distinctive symbolic feature that identifies a character. Identify Isis's attributes: a serpent (left hand), a vulture (wrapped around the base of Isis's crown), a jug of water (right hand).**
What is an AMULET? (?) An object or charm, usually worn as jewelry.
Look for the amulet Isis wears around her neck (the Isis-knot, a fertility symbol).

5. **Compare with the painting of Osiris (image 1). Both of these works of art are Egyptian, but their overall** STYLES (?) **or design qualities are different. Describe the stylistic differences between Osiris and Isis. Consider: facial features, treatment of bodies and garments, and media. (Osiris's face, shown in profile, is consistent with Egyptian formulas for representing people. Isis has natural features more consistent with portraiture and meant to be seen from many sides. Isis's body is a** THREE-DIMENSIONAL (?) **sculpture with rounded forms, Osiris's body is a** TWO-DIMENSIONAL (?) **painting with flat, straight outlines and angles. Isis's garments have** NATURALISTIC (?) **and descriptive folds, Osiris's mummy garment has no folds or descriptive elements. The artist who painted Osiris used color, the artist who sculpted Isis did not.)**



Painting of Osiris from the *Mummy Case Of Lady Teshat*

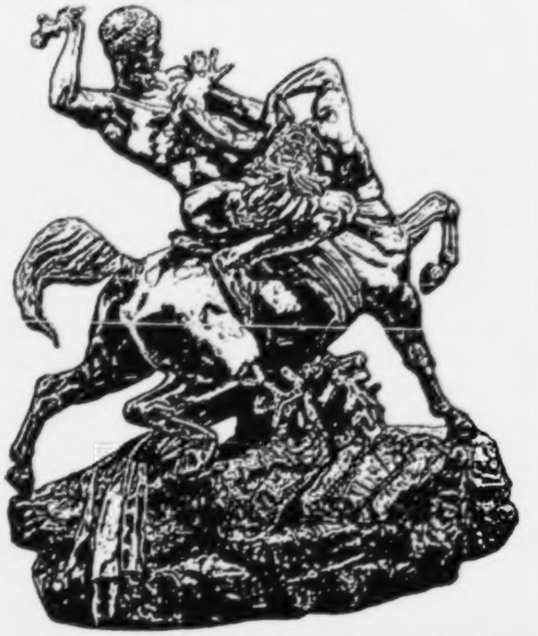
Think

1. **Isis tricked Ra into revealing his secret name so that she could have Ra's power.**
Think about Isis' attributes and their symbolic meanings-what do you think she did with that power? Dart-shaped serpent a reference to the power Isis gained from Ra, vulture on crown symbolizes protective powers, Tyt AMULET (?) a reference to her life-giving powers.
See also Story section of Osiris, image

2. Isis was a superhero to the ancient Egyptian people. A superhero is a hero who takes human form but possesses supernatural powers. Can you think of any women who are superheroes today? (Wonder Woman, Xena Warrior Princess, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, X-Men's Storm, Jean Grey and Rogue, the Power Puff Girls, Dark Angel, and Tomb Raider's Lara Croft.)

3. Egyptian works of art you have studied in the World Mythology in Art image set all include ATTRIBUTE ? of the gods they represent. Review Osiris , Thoth, and Isis.
Why did the Egyptian artists use attributes when they depicted these gods? To identify the gods.

Theseus Slaying a Centaur



THESEUS SLAYING A CENTAUR
1085-710 B.C. (21st-24th Dynasty)
Painted and varnished linen
The William Hood Dunwoody Fund

KEY IDEAS

- The Athenians admired Theseus (THEE-see-us) because he possessed a powerful intellect as well as physical strength.
- Greek mythology and art experienced a great revival in much of Europe during the late 1700s and 1800s.
- The twisting pose and powerful emotion of Barye's (BAY-ree) sculpture of Theseus are typical of the French ROMANTIC STYLE.

STORY

Theseus was the son of Aegeus (EE-GEE-us), the king of Athens. Remarkably intelligent and very strong, Theseus accomplished many amazing tasks. He killed the mighty Minotaur (MIN-a-tor) in the Labyrinth of Crete (CREET), and prevented an invasion of Athens by the Amazons, a race of female warriors.

Pirithoüs (pi-RITH-oh-us), King of the Lapiths (LAP-iths), heard of Theseus's reputation and wanted to see for himself if Theseus was indeed as brave and clever as people said. So, one day when Theseus was herding his cattle near Marathon, Pirithoüs made a raid on his herd. A fight broke out at once. However, Pirithoüs overcome with admiration for Theseus, surrendered and humbly told him that he would accept any punishment Theseus chose. But Theseus asked only for his friendship.

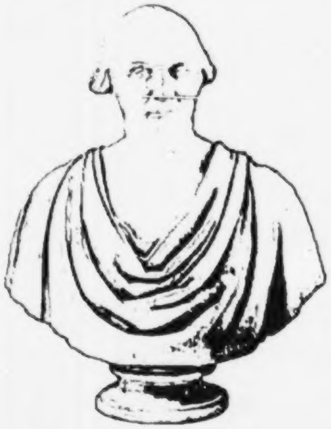
Some time later, Pirithoüs invited his friend Theseus to his wedding to Hippodamia (hippo-DAME-ee-ah). Among the many wedding guests were the Centaurs (SEN-tars), neighbors of Pirithoüs. The Centaurs had the bodies of horses and the torsos and heads of men. They were an unruly bunch! They drank too much wine and started to make trouble. When they tried to kidnap Hippodamia, Theseus quickly intervened, defeating the Centaurs and saving his friend's bride.

BACKGROUND

Neoclassicism and Romanticism

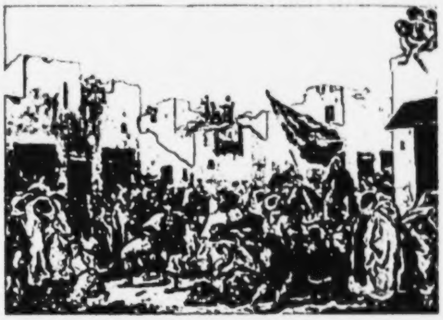
The excavation, about 250 years ago, of ancient CLASSICAL ruins in the Roman cities of Herculaneum (her-cue-LANE-ee-um) and Pompeii (pom-PAY) inspired a revived interest in Greek and Roman art and ideas. A new art style, called neoclassicism, drew on the art of Greece and Rome and favored themes drawn from classical myths. The style of NEO-CLASSICAL art favors idealized forms, attention to detail, and careful rendering of surface textures. It is calm and restrained. Male nudes are popular neoclassical subjects, and they express the ancient Greek concept of the ideal man as one who, like Theseus, balances physical and intellectual powers.

By the mid-19th century, when Bayre produced this sculpture the restrained and disciplined style of Neoclassicism had been replaced by the more flamboyant style of the Romantic Movement which appeals directly to the spectator's emotions.



Sculpture in the Neoclassical style favored idealized forms and attention to detail

Bust of George Washington
Hiram Powers
c. 1853
Marble
Gift of the Minneapolis Tower Company



The Romantic style in this painting features emotional subject matter

Fanatics of Tangier
Eugene Delacroix
1837 - 1838
oil on canvas
Bequest of Mr. Jerome

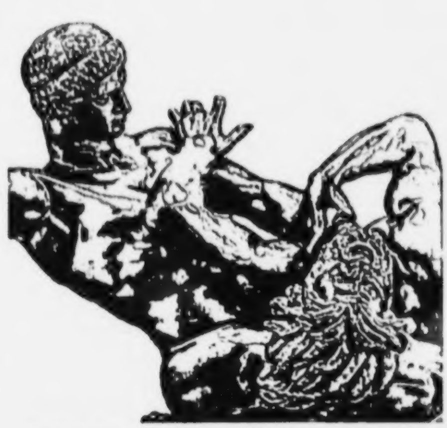
By the mid-19th century, when Bayre produced this sculpture the restrained and disciplined style of Neoclassicism had been replaced by the more flamboyant style of the Romantic Movement which appeals directly to the spectator's emotions.

Antoine-Louis Barye

The theme of man and beast locked in struggle appealed to the Romantic French sculptor Antoine Louis (AN-twon LOO-ee) Barye, who specialized in animal sculpture. Barye regularly studied and sketched animals living in a zoo, as well as skeletons and preserved specimens in a natural history museum. He observed dissections and read scholarly papers on a variety of species.

Theseus Slaying a Centaur

The power of Barye's *Theseus Slaying a Centaur* lies in the brilliant contrasts of man and beast. Theseus is every bit the mythological hero, powerful and restrained. His mouth tightly closed, he calmly looks down at the centaur, who grimaces in pain. The line of the hero's body flows smoothly from his



Detail from *Theseus Slaying a Centaur*

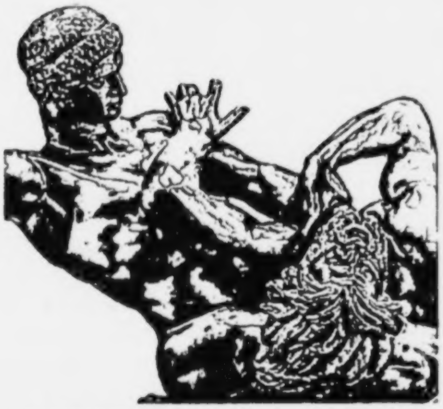
raised right arm into the curves of his out-thrust abdomen and bent knee. In contrast, the centaur's arms, legs, and tail extend in all directions. As in ancient Greek statues of athletes, Theseus's tight curls are idealistically controlled by a head band, while the centaur's long mane flies wildly.

The Romantic artists often depicted the turning point in a tale, as Barye did in this sculpture. Bayre captures the climactic moment when Theseus is about to lower his club to destroy the writhing centaur. The hero's grip on his foe's throat and the centaur's hopeless effort to free himself create a strong sense of tension. As Theseus digs his large toe into the centaur's flank, the animal man stumbles and succumbs.

Barye endowed his figures with the meticulous, IDEALIZED ? naturalism and attention to detail found in neoclassical sculpture, as well as with the high drama and narrative focus of Romanticism. Through these contrasts, Barye represents not only a specific moment from the myth of Theseus, but also the contest of good against evil, the triumph of civilization over barbarism, and the dominance of intellectual strength over brute force.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look



Detail from *Theseus Slaying a Centaur*

1. Can you tell who will win this battle, just by looking at the sculpture? The human figure: Theseus.
   What visual clues has the artist given you to predict the outcome? Theseus is higher than the Centaur. Theseus's facial expression is calm and determined. The Centaur appears painful and frantic. Theseus appears to have command of his body, while the Centaur's limbs and torso appear twisted and out of control.

2. Review the story of Theseus. In the story, Theseus represents good and the Centaur represents the opposite, evil.
   How has Barye made these two figures look opposite in his sculpture? Theseus's hair is neat and tidy; the Centaur's hair is wild and messy. Theseus has open eyes and a closed mouth; the Centaur's eyes are closed and his mouth is open. Theseus's body appears centered and compact; the Centaur's limbs and tail fly out into space.

3. Where is most of the action taking place in this sculpture? In the area between the heads and shoulders of the two figures.
   How has Barye directed our attention to this area? Centaur's body is tilted upward and curves into the area of the action. The figures interlocking arms curve into each other. Theseus's raised arm suggests an implied movement toward the Centaur's head. Theseus gazes directly at the Centaur's head.

4. Imagine that the limbs and bodies of these two figures are lines. What kind of lines are they? Are they thick or thin? Are they smooth? Jagged? Bumpy? Do the lines curve or are they

straight? Where do the lines touch each other? Barye's sculpture implies movement and tension. How do the quality and direction of the sculpture's lines contribute to the implied movement and tension? Thick, smooth lines sharply curve or angle into one another, implying movement and tension where the lines interact. The bodies of the figures can be seen as twisting or spiraling lines that add to the feeling of tension.

5. ROMANTIC **artists such as Barye paid a great deal of attention to details.** Where can you see Barye's attention to detail in his sculpture of Theseus and the Centaur? Musculature of the two figures; the Centaur's flowing hair, tail, and beard; the facial expressions of the figures.

Think

1. **Review the story of Theseus and the Centaur. What part of the story did Barye choose to represent?** **Why do you think he made this choice? Hint: Barye chose to represent this moment in the story because he was interested in the French** ROMANTIC **values of his time. The Romantic** STYLE **in art was highly theatrical and flamboyant.** Barye chose to represent the climax of the story, the most active, exciting, and dramatic moment. **Think of another story you know. What part of this story would you represent if you were designing a sculpture in the Romantic style?**

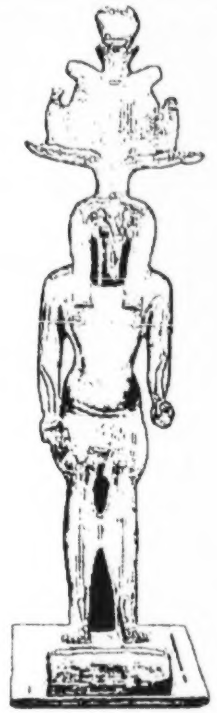
2. **Barye was a sculptor who specialized in animals. He studied animals at museums and zoos and liked to show them in dramatic poses.** What other stories can you think of that Barye might be interested in? Any stories that contain animals who perform dramatic feats.

3. **Greek and Roman art and ideas became very popular in Europe because of discoveries of ancient ruins during the 18th century.** Can you think of any modern discoveries, inventions, and technologies that have created a new interest in something? New technology created new interest in "video" pinball games. New recycling technology sparked an interest in recycling and generated recycling products. Digital imaging technology created a new interest in animation.

Thoth

KEY IDEAS

- In ancient Egyptian mythology, Thoth was the god of the moon, god of wisdom, the measurer of time, and the inventor of writing and numbers. He is credited with devising the standard 365-day year.
- The rigid pose, SYMMETRY, (?) and formal ATTRIBUTES (?) of this statuette are typical of traditional Egyptian art.



THOTH
664-525 B.C. (26th Dynasty)
Bronze
Gift of Lily Place

STORY

Shu (shoe), the son of the sun god, Ra pronounced (Rah), reigned as king of Egypt for many years. When his daughter Nut (newt) fell in love with the god Geb (gebb), Shu was wildly jealous. To keep the lovers far apart, he turned Nut into the sky and Geb into the earth. Then he cursed Nut with barrenness, proclaiming that there were no months of the year in which she could give birth.

Thoth, the god of the moon, time, and measure, took pity on Nut and Geb. He challenged the reigning gods to a game of dice and soundly beat them all. As his prize he asked the gods to give him five days in addition to those that already existed. Thoth in turn presented the five extra days to the sky goddess, Nut. Because these five extra days did not belong to any particular month, they did not fall under Shu's curse. Thus, the goddess was able to use them to produce five children, including Osiris (oh-SIGH-rus) and Isis (EYE-sus).

Prior to Thoth's gift, each of the twelve months of the Egyptian calendar had 30 days, resulting in a 360-day year. Thoth's act of kindness reconciled the Egyptian calendar with the earth's actual 365-day cycle.[1]

[1] There is a parallel myth in Greek mythology. The Greek god Hermes, who is often associated with Thoth, played checkers with the moon, and won from her the 70th part of each day of her illumination. From all the winnings he assembled five full days, and added them to the 360 days of the year.

BACKGROUND

Thoth

Thoth had many roles. In addition to being the god of the moon, the god of wisdom, and the measurer of time, he was scribe, moralist, messenger, and supreme magician. The ancient Egyptians credited him with inventing writing. He was the patron god of all arts, sciences, and intellectual pursuits. Ancient Egyptians believed that before the dead could enter the Afterworld, their hearts were weighed against a feather of truth to determine whether they had led good and honest lives. In his role as scribe, Thoth recorded the results of each judgment.

Votive Figures

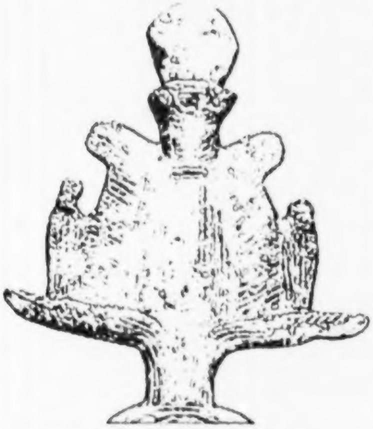
In ancient Egypt, all events, large and small, were attributed to the influence of the gods. Only through worship and offerings to these gods could humans expect to maintain balance in their lives, both on earth and in the after-life. People placed small votive statues of gods at burial sites, inviting the gods to inhabit the sculptures and protect the deceased from evil. Other figures were used as offerings at temples. Artists mass-produced many bronze statuettes during the prosperous 26th Dynasty.

Thoth

This bronze statuette depicts Thoth in a typical manner, as a man with the head of an ibis, a large bird of the Nile. Egyptians associated the ibis's long curved beak with the moon, so the ibis was regarded as one of Thoth's earthly representatives. *Thoth* wears a simple loincloth and a long wig, both decorated with rows of fine lines. The holes in his hands suggest that they once held objects, probably a reed pen, an ATTRIBUTE (?) of Thoth's role as a scribe, and either a palette for writing on or a staff, symbolizing his power.

Another votive statuette from ancient Egypt

Statuette of Isis
1st century A.D.
Bronze
Gift of The Morse Foundation



Detail of crown from *Thoth*

Crown

Thoth's crown is filled with symbols (See detail.) . The central part is the crown of Upper Egypt worn by pharaohs, which means Thoth was considered earthly royalty. The feathers of truth on each side of the center refer to Thoth's role in the judgment of the dead. The solar disc at the top indicates his cosmic powers, the serpents with smaller discs on the outsides symbolize his sovereignty, and the ram horns at the base attest to his strength and virility.

Profile of an Ibis

Style

The style and form of this seated statuette of *Thoth* are typical of Egyptian art. The symmetry of the piece, *Thoth*'s rigid pose, and the formal ATTRIBUTES (?) all recall the traditional style. The naturalistic curves of *Thoth*'s torso, arms, and legs, however, suggest the influence of Greek art during this period of great trade between the two cultures.

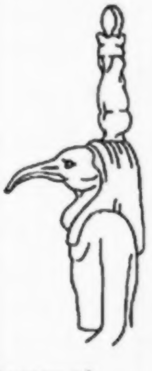


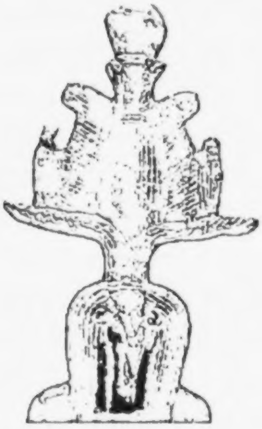
Diagram of *Thoth*'s profile

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

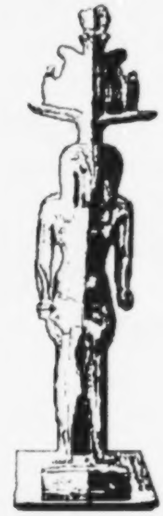
Look

1. This sculpture represents Thoth as a man with the head of an ibis. Egyptians associated the ibis's long curved beak with one of Thoth's roles as god of the moon, god of wisdom, the measurer of time, and the inventor of writing and numbers.
   Can you guess which role the ibis's beak refers to? God of the moon, because the curve of the ibis's beak is like a crescent moon.

2. SYMMETRY is a precisely balanced arrangement of forms on either side of an imaginary line through the center of an object. ASYMMETRY is an arrangement of forms that do not appear the same on either side of the imaginary center line.
   Is the *Thoth* sculpture symmetrical or asymmetrical? Symmetrical.
   Does the symmetry of the sculpture make it appear rigid or active? Rigid.



Detail of crown from *Thoth*

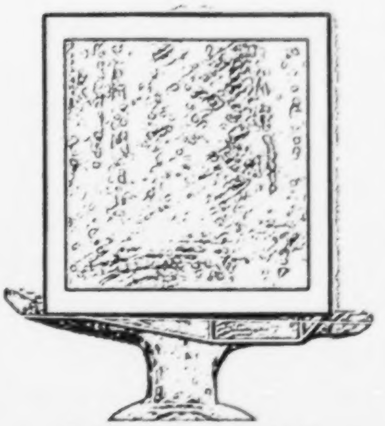


The line of symmetry from *Thoth*

3. An ATTRIBUTE is a distinctive symbolic feature that identifies a character. Find *Thoth*'s attributes on his crown: a solar disk (top center of crown), serpents with smaller discs (on the far outsides of the crown), and ram horns (at the base of the crown).
   Where is an ibis? Head of an ibis takes the place of a human head on the sculpture.

4. Where has the artist used lines on this sculpture? On *Thoth*'s crown, wig, and loincloth.
   Look carefully at the crown.
   How has the artist used incised lines to indicate the different areas and objects that make up the crown? Varied the direction of the lines.

5. **Egyptian people left bronze figures like this one at temples or funeral sites to attract and please the deity represented. With this purpose in mind, how big do you think this is? Find an object of similar size to this sculpture-eight inches high.**
   How might the way it was used have influenced its size? Such statuettes had to be small to be portable.



Incised lines from *Thoth*

Think

1. **This sculpture is very small because it may have been left at a tomb to help the spirit of the deceased travel to the next world, the Afterworld.**
   What was Thoth's role in relation to the deceased? As scribe, he recorded the results of the judgment that determined whether a person had led a good and honest life.
   Why would Thoth be helpful to a spirit traveling to the Afterworld? Once Thoth recorded a judgment, the spirit could enter the Afterworld.

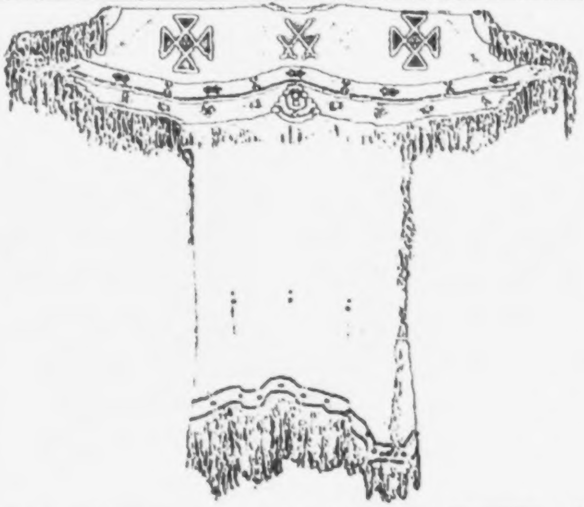
2. **In Thoth's story, Thoth gives a gift of five days to the Egyptians, initiating the standard 365-day year.**
   Why is a 365-day year considered standard? The earth travels a full rotation around the sun in 365 days.
   Which of Thoth's godly roles came into play when he initiated the 365-day year? Thoth the god of wisdom intervened on behalf of the lovers Nut and Geb; Thoth the measurer of time reconciled the Egyptian calendar with the earth's actual cycle.

3. **There are small holes in each of *Thoth*'s hands that probably once held objects that are *Thoth*'s** ATTRIBUTES. ? **Consider Thoth's roles: god of the moon, god of wisdom, the measurer of time, and the inventor of writing and numbers.**
   What might he originally have held in his hands? Although we can't know for sure, Thoth is usually portrayed with the attributes of his role as inventor of writing: a reed pen and a writing palette.

Woman's Dress

KEY IDEAS

- The turtle figures prominently in the Lakota story of the remaking of the world.
- Because of her role in the Lakota creation story, the sacred turtle is associated with women and their gift of creating human life.
- The beaded yoke of this Lakota *woman's dress* features the traditional turtle-by-the-shore-of-the-lake design. The ABSTRACT U-shape represents the sacred turtle.



WOMAN'S DRESS
20th century
Leather, cotton, copper, and glass beads
Gift of James David and John David

STORY

There was another world before this one. But the people of that world did not behave themselves. Displeased, the Creator set out to make a new world. He sang several songs to bring rain, which poured stronger with each song. As he sang the fourth song, the earth split apart and water gushed up through the many cracks, causing a flood. By the time the rain stopped, all of the people and nearly all of the animals had drowned. Only Kangi the crow survived.

Kangi pleaded with the Creator to make him a new place to rest. So the Creator decided the time had come to make a new world. From his huge pipe bag, which contained all types of animals and birds, the Creator selected four animals known for their ability to remain under water for a long time. He sent each in turn to retrieve a lump of mud from beneath the floodwaters. First the loon dove deep into the dark waters, but it was unable to reach the bottom. The otter, even with its strong webbed feet, also failed. Next, the beaver used its large flat tail to propel itself deep under the water, but it too brought nothing back. Finally, the Creator took the turtle from his pipe bag and urged it to bring back some mud.

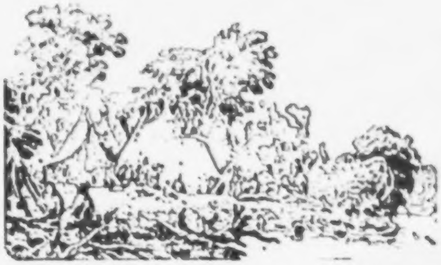
Turtle stayed under the water for so long that everyone was sure it had drowned. Then, with a splash, the turtle broke the water's surface! Mud filled its feet and claws and the cracks between its upper and lower shells. Singing, the Creator shaped the mud in his hands and spread it on the water, where it was just big enough for himself and the crow. He then shook two long eagle wing feathers over the mud until earth spread wide and varied, overcoming the waters. Feeling sadness for the dry land, the Creator cried tears that became oceans, streams, and lakes. He named the new land Turtle Continent in honor of the turtle who provided the mud from which it was formed.

The Creator then took many animals and birds from his great pipe bag and spread them across the earth. From red, white, black, and yellow earth, he made men and women. The Creator gave the people his sacred pipe and told them to live by it. He warned them about the fate of the people who came before them. He promised all would be well if all living things learned to live in harmony. But the world would be destroyed again if they made it bad and ugly.

BACKGROUND

The Lakota were once part of a much larger group of people, the Dakota, who lived in the northern woodlands, including the southern two-thirds of Minnesota. Within the Dakota were three closely related language groups-the Dakota-speakers, the Nakota-speakers, and the Lakota-speakers. They did not travel from place to place, but settled in one area living in bark lodges in the forests, harvesting wild rice, and making maple sugar. Invasions by the French in the 1640s and ensuing battles with their own Indian enemies forced many Nakota and Lakota to move westward. They developed distinctive Plains cultures. The Lakota acquired horses, introduced to North America by the Spanish in the 17th century, and by the 18th century were nomadic buffalo hunters.

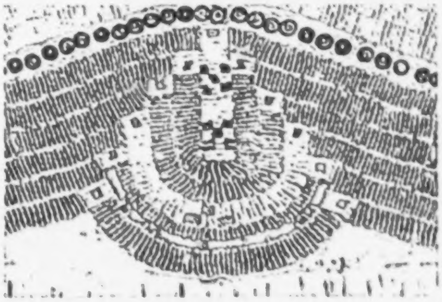
By the mid-19th century, Euro-American settlers had overrun the sacred lands of the Lakota, and white hunters had decimated the buffalo herds on which the Plains Indians, the varied people who lived between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains, depended. Eventually the United States government confined the Plains Indians to designated lands called reservations. Although reservations deprived them of their traditional way of life, the Lakota struggled to preserve many of their cultural traditions.



Seth Eastman
Dacotah Encampment
Watercolor
Courtesy W. Duncan and Nivin MacMillan and the Afton Historical Society Press

Quilling and Beading

QUILLWORK was the primary art form of traditional Lakota women. They decorated clothing and other surfaces with GEOMETRIC designs elaborately embroidered with dyed porcupine or bird quills. When colorful glass beads became readily available from Euro-American traders, they began to replace quills in embroidered ornamentation. Beads were easier to acquire, easier to use, and came in a wide variety of bright colors. Beadworkers strung several beads onto a thread and then stitched them down at intervals to create colorful and often SYMBOLIC patterns. The enforced restriction on travel and economic hardships of reservation life spurred a golden age in Lakota beadwork, especially as beaded objects became valued items in the tourist market.



Detail of beadwork from the *Woman's Dress*

Turtle

Lakota dance dresses are traditionally decorated with a beaded yoke that incorporates the turtle-by-the-shore-of-the-lake design. Because of her role in the creation story of the Lakota, the turtle is a sacred animal. The Lakota associate women with the sacred turtle because of their gift of creating human life. Lakota women aspired to be like the turtle - resilient and long-lived. Turtle MOTIFS (moe-TEEFS) were beaded on women's dresses, leggings, and bags and on cradle boards and protective umbilical amulets for baby girls.[1]

Woman's Dress
This was the "best dress" of a Lakota woman, worn for dancing or for special occasions.[2] When a woman danced in this dress, the beaded yoke sparkled in the sunlight, the fringe swung up and down, and the bells jingled.

The beaded designs on the yoke have spiritual power and significance. At the lower center of the yoke, resting directly over the wearer's heart, is a multicolored U-shaped design representing the sacred turtle. The narrow white strip across the width of the yoke is the lakeshore. The blue-and-gold design in the white strip above the turtle may represent a morning star, and the checkered designs around it may suggest mountains or hills. Above the white strip, the broad blue area punctuated by SYMMETRICAL ? designs represents the sky's reflection in the waters of the lake, the home of the sacred turtle.[3] While the meaning of most of these designs is no longer known, designs in this part of a Lakota dress traditionally referred to spiritual beings who lived in the sky and on the lakeshore. By the early 20th century, when this dress was made, Lakota artists often used such designs for aesthetic or visual effect alone.

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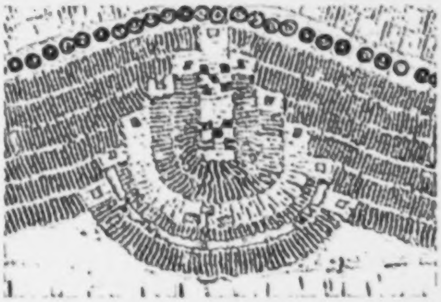
[1] These amulets were used to hold the baby's umbilical cord and provide good luck in many tribes. Boys received amulets in the shape of lizards (the symbol of long life and wisdom) while girls' amulets were shaped like turtles. Some tribes tied the amulet onto the baby's cradleboard, where it served as the child's first toy. In other cultures, the child's mother wore the amulet.

[2] A woman tanned, cut and sewed the hides used to make this dress.

[3] Father Peter J. Powell, D. D., "Beauty for New Life: An Introduction to Cheyenne and Lakota Sacred Art," in Evan M. Maurer, *The Native American Heritage: A Survey of North American Indian Art* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1977), p.45.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Look

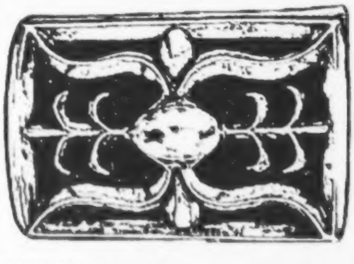


Detail of turtle from the *Woman's Dress*

1. **Tell the Lakota story of the remaking of the world. Because the story honors the sacred turtle as life-giver, the turtle symbol was worn over a woman's heart.**
   Which shape is the turtle? The U-shape at the center of the yoke is a symbol for turtle.
   The design on the yoke of this dress is called turtle-by-the-shore-of-the-lake design.
   What represents the lakeshore in the design? The narrow white strip directly above the turtle symbol.
   How is the lake itself represented? With the color blue suggesting the reflection of the sky.
   What might the checkered designs around the turtle represent? mountains or hills.

2. What is this dress made of? Elk hide.
   How can you tell? **(If you have a piece of leather or hide you might pass it around as an example.)** The folds suggest its heavy weight.

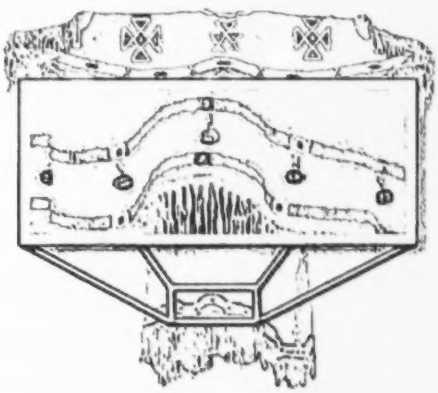
3. How are the brightly colored beads applied? **(If you have an object that is beaded you might pass it around as an example.)** In rows, several beads are strung on the needle at a time; then thread is drawn through the hide and brought back out to receive more beads.
   How many different colors of beads have been used on this dress? Sky blue, dark blue, white, red, green, and yellow.
   Which colors also appeared in the Navajo creation story related to the silver and turquoise Ketoh? White, blue, yellow and red.
   Why do you think there is more blue than any other color? Because water is the realm of the turtle.



Ketoh (Wrist Guard)
About 1930
Cast silver with turquoise on a leather band
Bequest of Virginia Doneghy

4. What other decorations make this a good dress for dancing? Bells in the beaded border on the hem.

5. **The Lakota woman who beaded this dress made an** ABSTRACT (?) SYMBOL (?) **that stands for the turtle. Abstract means that certain features are exaggerated and other details are left out.**
   What features of the turtle did this artist exaggerate? The oval shape and pattern of a turtle's shell.
   What features or details did she leave out? Legs, eyes, and tail, detailed pattern on the shell.



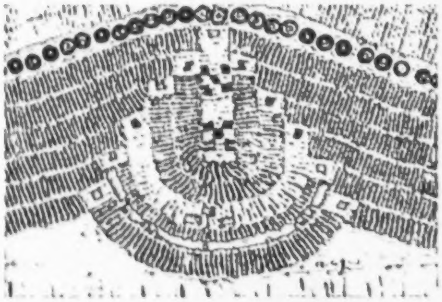
Detail of bells from the *Woman's Dress*

Think

1. **Women beaded turtle** MOTIFS (?) **on their dresses, leggings, bags, and on cradle boards and** AMULETS (?) **for their baby girls.**
   Why is the turtle an appropriate symbol for girls and women? Recall the story and turtle's association with the creation of the world. Turtle has the power to create life.

2. **Lakota people prized the characteristics of the turtle. Women aspired to be like the turtle and hoped their children would also take on the qualities of the turtle.**
   What qualities do turtles have that women might want for themselves and their children? Turtles live long, are resilient, and are always protected by their shell.

3. **Lakota mythology surrounding the turtle has to do with the creation of the world as we know it.**
   Can you think of another popular story about a turtle? The Hare and the Tortoise.
   What qualities were associated with that turtle? "Slow and steady always win the race."
   Can you think of other animals that exhibit qualities that people find desirable? Lions are courageous;



Detail of turtle from the *Woman's Dress*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

foxes are sly and smart; elephants have great memory; owls are wise; mice are quiet; bees are busy; ants are industrious; oxen are strong.

4. **This Lakota dress was made to be worn while dancing. If we were to see it as it was meant to be used, we would hear music, the beads would reflect the light, the bells would jingle, and the fringe would swing and sway with the dancer's movements.**
   Is it possible for us to appreciate this dress as a work of art even though we cannot see it being worn in a dance? Why or why not? Would we appreciate the dress more if we could see the dress on a dancer? Why or why not? No right answer.

Further Reading

Abrahams, Roger D. **African Folktales: Traditional Stories of the Black World.** New York: Pantheon Books, 1983. A diverse collection of nearly 100 stories from across the African continent selected and retold by Abrahams.

Addiss, Steven, ed. **Japanese Ghosts and Demons: Art of the Supernatural.** New York: George Brazilier, Inc., 1985. A collection of scholarly essays about the appearance of various legendary figures in Japanese art. Some of the stories about these figures are incorporated into the essays.

Bruhac, Joseph. **Native American Stories**. Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Publishing, 1991. A rich collection of stories drawn from native cultures of North America retold by Bruhac.

Eberhard, Wolfram, ed. **Folktales of China**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. A collection of 79 stories organized according to themes including the origins of human, animal, and plant characteristics, tales of love, and persons with magic powers. Includes six tales from Communist China.

Erdoes, Richard, and Alfonso Ortiz. **American Indian Myths and Legends**. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. A very comprehensive collection of myths and legends organized according to themes, such as creation stories, tales of love, and tales of animals. This book includes an extensive bibliography.

Guirand, Felix, ed. **New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology**. London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group, Ltd. 1972. A popular comprehensive encyclopedia of mythology with an introduction by Robert Graves and chapters by various authors dedicated to the mythology of many world cultures. Provides excellent background to many belief systems, pantheons, and stories. Heavily illustrated with art works from around the world.

Hall, James. **Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art**. 1974. New York: Harper & Row, 1979. This is an excellent source for summaries of stories from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and from the Christian world. Very useful for identifying and interpreting the attributes of many mythological characters as they appear in art works.

Hamilton, Edith. **Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes**. 1942. New York: Meridian, 1989. Still one of the best sources for the myths of ancient Greece and Rome. A brief look at Norsemythology is also included.

Leeming, David Adams. **The World of Myth: An Anthology**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. An excellent source for looking at shared themes in mythology from around the world. This anthology covers such cosmic themes as The Creation, The Flood, The Afterlife, The Apocalypse, as well as myths of the gods, hero myths, and place and object myths. Each chapter is followed by a bibliography.

Spence, Lewis. **Ancient Egyptian Myths and Legends**. 1915. New York: Dover, 1990. A thorough study of the many beliefs, gods, and stories of Ancient Egypt.

Glossary

ABSTRACT
Describing something that refers to reality but that is not representational. For example, forms that are simplified, exaggerated, or otherwise manipulated may be considered abstract. Compare NATURALISTIC. (?)

ADDITIVE SCULPTURE
Sculpture made by adding material to build up a form. This can be done by molding or MODELING (?) a medium such as clay or by putting one piece of any material such as wood on top of another. Compare SUBTRACTIVE SCULPTURE. (?)

AERIAL PERSPECTIVE
A technique for representing THREE-DIMENSIONAL (?) space on a flat surface. The farther objects are from us, the more bluish gray they appear and the less detail we see. Also called atmospheric perspective, it imitates the way distant objects appear to the human eye.

ALLEGORY
The use of SYMBOLS (?) and allusions in literature and the visual arts to give a work secondary meaning. This device was used by Greek painters and was widely used during the RENAISSANCE, (?) Mannerist, and BAROQUE (?) periods.

AMULET
Something worn as a charm against evil or injury.

ASSEMBLAGE
A technique of arranging and assembling unrelated objects, parts, and materials to form a sculptural collage.

ASYMMETRY
An arrangement of forms that do not appear to be the same on either side of an imaginary center line. Contrast SYMMETRY. (?)

ATTRIBUTE
A conventional, SYMBOLIC (?) object used for identifying gods, saints, or other beings.

BACKGROUND
That part of an image that appears to be farthest from view. Contrast FOREGROUND. (?)

BAROQUE
The artistic STYLE (?) that prevailed in Europe from the 17th century through the mid-18th century. Baroque art is characterized by theatrical emotion, drama, and illusionistic effects. Some artists used dramatic lighting to spotlight scenes of ordinary life, while others chose inherently dramatic subjects and enhanced them through theatrical interpretation.

BOSS
A raised decoration in metalwork, furniture, or architecture. A boss can be carved from a protrusion, or attached to a surface.

CAST
Describing an object produced or reproduced by pouring plaster or molten metal into a mold. Much sculpture, jewelry, and decorative art is cast.

CLASSICAL
In art history, a term describing the arts of ancient Greece and Rome. Many later periods in European art referred to these antique arts as standards of excellence.

CLASSICISM
Adhering to the STYLES (?) of Greek and Roman antiquity.

COMPOSITION
The organization and structure of a work of art, determined by the arrangement of shapes, forms, colors, areas of light and dark, and so on.

CONTRAPPOSTAL
Describes a stance of a human figure in ASYMMETRICAL (?) balance. In this stance most of the weight is on one leg (the engaged leg), causing the vertical axis of the body to take on a slight S-curve. This pose, celebrated as a NATURALISTIC (?) innovation, was developed in the CLASSICAL (?) period in Greece.

CROP
To visually cut off parts of something so they do not appear within a picture.

CULT
A community of religious worship. Devotion to an ideal, person, or god.

DISTANCE
The degree or amount of separation between two points, lines, surfaces, or objects measured along the shortest path joining them.

EMBELLISH
To enhance the attractiveness of something by adding ornamental details.

EMBROIDERY
A technique of sewing decorations on fabric with needle and thread.

ENGOBE
A clay and water solution used to paint the decorations onto Attic vases. Engobe is applied to the clay vase before firing, and turns black during the firing process.

FOREGROUND
The part of an image that appears to be closest to the viewer.

FORMULAIC
Describing a work of art done according to a preconceived mathematical formula. The ancient Egyptians, for example, represented the human figure according to a set formula.

GENRE
Describing a type of art that represents scenes of everyday life (as opposed to landscape, still life, portraiture).

GEOMETRIC
Describing mechanical or human-made shapes, such as squares, rectangles, circles, and ovals. Contrast ORGANIC. (?)

GESSO
A mixture of finely ground plaster and glue that is often spread on a surface prior to painting to create a ground or to add TEXTURE. (?)

GILDING
The art of attaching thin metal leaf to an object to approximate the effect of solid or INLAID (?) metal.

GOLD LEAF
A very thin sheet or layer of beaten gold, which is GILDED (?) to objects.

HIEROGLYPH
A picture or SYMBOL (?) used in writing, especially in the writing of ancient Egypt.

HORIZON LINE
The most distant line marking the juncture of earth and sky.

HUMANISM
Literary, cultural, and philosophical movement centered on human value and achievements.

IDEALISM
Achieving a standard of perfection by manipulating nature to create an ideal.

IDEALIZED
Describing people or objects that have been altered to present perfect or ideal types.

INCISED
Scratched into a surface.

IMPLIED
A line that is visually suggested by the arrangement of forms, lights and darks, or other elements in a work of art.

INLAY
A design or picture created by inserting thin pieces of material such as metal, stone, wood, tile, or ivory into a ground. The combined ground and inlaid materials appear to be of one surface.

KILN
A very hot furnace, lined with brick or stone, used for firing ceramic objects and for fusing enamels onto metal surfaces.

LACQUER
A natural varnish obtained from the sap of the Asian lac tree.

LEGEND
Stories handed down through history about real people or events, although the details may be unlikely or exaggerated.

LINEAR
Emphasizing contour and outline.

MATTE FINISH
A lusterless or flat surface appearance, as opposed to the shiny appearance of a glossy finish.

MIDDLEGROUND
That part of an image that lies between the FOREGROUND and the BACKGROUND.

MODELING
In sculpture, the technique of building up a form by an additive process of shaping and enlarging with a material such as clay. In drawing, painting, and other TWO-DIMENSIONAL media, the depiction of a solid or THREE-DIMENSIONAL form, usually achieved through the representation of light and shadow.

MOTIF
A theme or image in a work of art. Motifs are often repeated.

NATURALISTIC
Describing art in which the subject is rendered as closely as possible to the way it is seen by the human eye. Contrast STYLIZED and ABSTRACT.

NEGATIVE SHAPES
The area that surrounds POSITIVE SHAPES.

NEOCLASSICISM
The revival of Greek and Roman art, literature, and culture during the late 18th and the 19th centuries. Aided by the archaeological discoveries of the remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the movement used CLASSICAL MOTIFS and techniques to disseminate predominantly moral messages. Neoclassical subjects are generally high-minded, drawn from ancient history and mythology. Neoclassical compositions are characteristically balanced and controlled.

NOMADIC
Referring to people without a permanent residence, who move from place to place. Hunting and gathering societies are often nomadic, moving with the cycles of nature and the animals they rely upon for food and other products.

NON-OBJECTIVE
Describing art in which visual form is used without reference to anything outside of itself; also called nonrepresentational. Compare and contrast NATURALISTIC and ABSTRACT and STYLIZED.

ORACLE
One who can foresee the future. In ancient cultures, an oracle was consulted before making important decisions.

ORGANIC
A term used to describe curving, natural forms. Contrast GEOMETRIC.

OVERLAPPING
A technique of creating the illusion of depth by placing one object in front of another.

PATTERN
An artistic or decorative design that involves regular repetition of shapes, lines, or colors.

PERSPECTIVE
Techniques for depicting the illusion of three dimensions on a TWO-DIMENSIONAL (?) surface, as in a drawing. See AERIAL PERSPECTIVE. (?)

PILLAR PRINT
A type of Japanese WOODBLOCK PRINT (?) made by pasting two vertical sheets of paper together to create a long narrow print suitable for hanging on a narrow wooden pillar.

POINT OF VIEW
The imagined position of the viewer within a work of art. Usually artists present images as though seen from a single point or place. However, Chinese landscapes, for example, are often presented as though viewed from several points simultaneously.

POSITIVE SHAPES
Shapes that occupy space. Contrast NEGATIVE SHAPES. (?)

PRINT
An image reproduced, usually on paper, from a prepared block, stone, or plate. Numerous copies of the PRINT are usually made, allowing for a wide distribution of the images. Printmaking processes include etching, engraving, dry point, metalcut, and woodcut.

QUILLWORK
The art of embroidered decoration using prepared and dyed porcupine quills.

REALISM
The representation of the external world in an objective and factual manner.

REGALIA
The often elaborate clothing and accessories worn by kings, queens, emperors, and other royalty and important figures.

REGIONALISM
A movement in American 20th-century art that peaked during the Great Depression in the 1930s. Paintings of this STYLE (?) celebrate life in small-town, rural America. The most important regionalist artists, Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, and Grant Wood, were all from the Midwest. Their styles, though different, have traditional, conservative, nationalistic overtones.

RELIEF
The projection of a figure or design from the BACKGROUND (?) on which it is modeled or carved.

RENAISSANCE
A historical period spanning the 14th to 16th centuries generally defined by the revival of arts and letters under the influence of CLASSICAL (?) models. Because the Renaissance began in Italy, the term often implies Italian Renaissance. Early Renaissance refers to the period from about 1400 to 1500, and High Renaissance refers to the years between 1500 and 1525. Italian Renaissance art accorded a new dignity to human beings and their works. This art reflects interest in humanism, science, and the ideals of the classical world. Italian artists employed many devices such as scientific PERSPECTIVE (?) to achieve a sense of NATURALISM (?) in their art.

ROMANTICISM
A reaction to the rationality of Enlightenment thought and the staid NEOCLASSICISM (?) of mid-18th-century art. This artistic concept, which asserted the validity of subjective experience, entails a love of

exotic or foreign subjects, rich colors, and a dramatic use of light and line. Romantic artists often explore themes of passion, imagination, and the subconscious.

SARCOPHAGUS
A stone coffin.

SCALE
The relative size of an object when compared to others of its kind, to its environment, or to humans.

SCARIFICATION PATTERNS
The decoration of the skin by creating scars that form. Used by many African cultures to mark family or community associations.

STYLE
A manner of treatment or execution of works of art that is characteristic of a civilization, a people, or an individual.

STYLIZED
Describing the simplification or ABSTRACTION of forms according to specific conventions rather than personal expression or NATURALISM.

SUBTRACTIVE SCULPTURE
Sculpture formed by removing unwanted material from a solid mass such as wood or marble. Contrast ADDITIVE SCULPTURE.

SYMBOL
Something that represents a concept, ideology, or thing through association, resemblance, or convention.

SYMBOLIST
A member of the Symbolist movement, which began in late-19th-century France. Symbolist poets and writers were united by an interest in the mystical and spiritual aspects of art. They often produced expressive, enigmatic images.

SYMMETRY
Balance achieved in a work of art by distributing weight (objects) equally on both sides of an imaginary center line. Contrast ASYMMETRY.

TEMPERA
A paint created by mixing pigment with water-soluble media such as eggs. Color must be applied in little strokes to blend colors on the canvas or panel, as tempera is opaque and, therefore, does not allow for layering in the way that more transparent oil paints do. Tempera produces a MATTE FINISH.

TERRA-COTTA
Fired clay used especially for vases and statuettes.

TEXTURE
The way the surface of an object feels. A texture may actually be rough or smooth to the touch, but an artist can also create an illusionary texture to make viewers believe they are seeing the texture of something like tree bark or a mountain even when the painting surface is actually smooth.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL
Occupying or giving the illusion of three dimensions (height, width, depth).

TWO-DIMENSIONAL
Having two dimensions (height and width); referring to something that is flat.

WOODBLOCK PRINT
A print made by carving an image on a wood block. Those parts not intended for printing are cut away, and ink is applied to the raised lines and surfaces that remain.

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